

ALL BRITISH EAGLE

THE WAR-TIME ADVENTURES OF
CAPTAIN KNIGHT'S WORLD-FAMOUS
GOLDEN EAGLE—MR. RAMSHAW.

By the same author

THE BOOK OF THE GOLDEN EAGLE



MR. RAMSHAW AND HIS COLLEAGUE

Frontispiece

ALL BRITISH EAGLE

By

CAPTAIN C. W. R. KNIGHT

M.C., F.R.P.S., F.Z.S.

London: HODDER AND STOUGHTON, Limited

First printed, November, 1943

THIS BOOK IS PRODUCED IN COMPLETE
CONFORMITY WITH THE
AUTHORISED ECONOMY STANDARD:

*Made and Printed in Great Britain for Hodder & Stoughton, Limited, London,
by C. Tinsley & Co., Ltd., Liverpool, London and Prescot.*

PREFACE

THERE can never be another Mr. Ramshaw. What a personality ; what poise ; what dignity ! And how tremendously alive he is ! Nothing seems to escape his crystal-clear eyes or—for that matter—his keen ears. I have only to peep round the door at him, and, at once, that sleek head and those searching eyes will be turned expectantly in my direction.

This is one of those rare occasions on which I can see him and he can't see me. I am indoors writing whilst he is outside, enjoying the June sunshine and playing with Jean, my daughter now in the Women's Land Army ; Flight-Lieutenant Leslie Hoyle—whom Ramshaw has not seen for two years—and Lieutenant Esmond Knight, my actor-nephew, who was blinded during the Prince of Wales-Bismarck action.

It is a lovely day, as warm as mid-summer, with roses and sweet-williams in bloom.

They seem to be having a very jolly time out there. Ramshaw is occupying the only really comfortable chair—one with well-padded arms and back, and is, to the delight of the others, having a little game all by himself ; grabbing at the cushioned back of the chair with terrific gusto, turning, twisting, and grabbing again with such violence that one can see the fabric and stuffing giving under the strain of it. He certainly does enter into the spirit of whatever is going on. Now he is leaning back, his eyes flashing, gripping with all his might as though doing battle with some mighty opponent.

" Here, go easy ! " I shout as I join the party, " that chair's worth about ten pounds, why not roll up a sack and let him play with that ? "

P R E F A C E

"Oh, he likes the back of the chair much better. Don't you, Ramshaw?" Jean enquires. "Please don't put him off, Dad."

At the sound of my voice Ramshaw stops his antics, and, sitting bolt upright, gazes enquiringly in my direction. "There, you've spoilt it all," complains Jean peevishly. "But, my dear girl, I really don't think it's worth while ruining a perfectly good arm-chair—even if we have been keeping it in the coach-house."

I might just as well have kept out of it. No sooner has Ramshaw realised that I have not brought him a present and have no intention of taking him out, than once more he settles down in grim earnest to the job of destroying our family heirloom. Now, at close quarters, I can hear, all too clearly, the ripping of fabric and the creaking of wood.

This fresh outburst of aggression is greeted with loud applause and roars of laughter.

"What's he doing now?" asks Esmond tensely, as he listens to the shouts of encouragement.

"Oh, he's putting on a grand show," answers Leslie excitedly, "he's got a terrific hold" . . . "now he's over on his side" . . . "he's up again." Leslie sounds exactly like a radio commentator reporting on a boxing match or a game of ice-hockey, "Oh, nice foot-work. He's . . . He's . . . Another straight left from the shoulder! Now he's holding . . . what a grip! . . . it looks as if . . . He's down . . . He's up. Oh, cripes, look at the stuffing coming out!"

"Yes, but that'll do," I break in. "Stop it, Ramshaw! you've done enough damage for one day. Come on, my lad, and let's find you another seat." Quite obediently, quite serenely, Ramshaw allows himself to be moved to a less seductive resting place.

P R E F A C E

Now I am back at my desk, trying to get on with this writing, but, of course, gaping out of the window most of the time to see what's going on outside, for I can't believe the party will remain tranquil for long.

No, just as I thought. There they are : trying a fresh game this time. Ramshaw is being encouraged to glide across the courtyard to them. He does it very neatly—very gently, really—considering his size and great strength. Presently he returns in quite a nonchalant way to the starting-point, completely undismayed by the cheers or laughter of the audience.

He is really imperturbable, doesn't seem to mind having his photograph taken by flash-light, the bursting of near-by bombs or being told he looks like a parrot.

Nevertheless, it must be admitted that there ARE things he does not like—scenery being shifted whilst he's on the stage, for instance, or being mauled about or treated in too rough a manner.

But, speaking generally, his tolerance of human beings is remarkable. Children seem rather to appeal to him ; at least he has never in the whole of his eventful career become impatient or irritated by their attentions. Yet, strangely enough, he is not over-partial to women. In this respect he suffers, I think, from a complex which originated when he was quite young. Women would often approach him in a furtive, apprehensive, rather suspicious sort of way, and, perhaps because of an instinctive feeling of mistrust, were inclined to make hurried nervous movements which, it seems, aroused in Ramshaw reactions of a similar nature.

He would never actually *attack* anyone—unless, of course, he were goaded into taking such a measure—but he sometimes assumes an aggressive attitude if a stranger approaches

P R E F A C E

him in a too stealthy or too belligerent manner. He lowers his head, looks the newcomer straight in the eye, hunches his shoulders, and perhaps makes little threatening movements which always deter the visitor from making further advances.

Ramshaw, then, is really a pretty ordinary sort of individual and subject to certain sympathies and antipathies like the rest of us.

At this moment I can see him out there in the sunshine with the others ; perfectly at ease and enjoying himself with people who know and understand him.

But it seems that it's tea-time. "Come on, chaps ; tea's ready !" is the cry. So we troop into the tiny dining-room and sit down to Esmond's favourite war-time tea with toast, water-cress and margarine—of all curious choices.

Meanwhile, Ramshaw has been put back into his quarters, and, like ourselves, is enjoying an afternoon meal. His, of course, is different and is, in his opinion, infinitely preferable. It is the head and neck of a freshly-killed chicken and he is wrenching off and swallowing great gobbets of it.

He looks magnificent and quite unlike the eagles that one has sometimes seen in cages. His feet and beak are perfectly shaped ; his eyes are bright and keen ; his plumage gleams like burnished copper. He is, in fact, a living replica of those wild eagles that we have so often watched in the far-off Scottish Highlands.

QUEBEC COTTAGE,
MONTREAL PARK,
SEVENOAKS.

June 16, 1943.



"WHAT'S HE DOING NOW?" ASKS ESMOND TENSELY

CONTENTS

	PAGE
PREFACE	5
CHAP.	
I. A FLYING SCOTSMAN GOES TO TOWN . . .	11
II. MR. RAMSHAW'S EDUCATION	19
III. CONCERNING AMERICA	26
IV. INTRODUCING TWO SOUTH AFRICANS . . .	40
V. STRANGE HUNTING WITH EAGLES	47
VI. GERMAN INTERLUDE AND THE TRIO IN ACTION .	52
VII. MR. RAMSHAW : SHEEP KILLER	60
VIII. THE PEACEFUL SUMMER OF 1939	70
IX. WAR DECLARED	81
X. AMERICA AHOY !	90
XI. WE JOIN THE B.E.F.	99
XII. WITH THE HOME GUARD	112
XIII. THE BATTLE OF BRITAIN	119
XIV. TORPEDOED	129
XV. SAFELY ACROSS	140
XVI. STEAM-HEAT AND PALM TREES	146
XVII. MR. RAMSHAW—ROYAL AIR FORCE MASCOT .	156
XVIII. WINGS FOR VICTORY	164

ILLUSTRATIONS

Mr. Ramshaw and his Colleague	<i>Frontispiece</i>
	FACING PAGE
"What's he doing now?" asks Esmond tensely	8
About to take-off	16
Returning	17
A short lecture on the habits of the eagle	32
With the U.S. Customs	33
The Crowned Eagle at home	36
The Martial Eagle abroad	37
The placid lion	44
Swaying rhythmically as the van takes a curve	45
"Here we go then!"	48
Landed with a "whop" on Esmond's glove	49
How dare you wear better feathers than me?	64
The unique photograph	65
Ramshaw and the Herons	68
Miss America	69
"Don't tell anyone!"	76
James meets an elephant out for a walk	77
Fred Allen, Mr. Ramshaw and Captain Knight	80
Publicity Stunt	81
Arras Souvenir	96
Mr. Ramshaw and the evacuees—hooded	97
A hare for the Home Guard	100
Back in London after the torpedoing	101
Mr. Ramshaw hopes he is through with engines	108
"Well, what's the joke?"	109
"Can I have his autograph?"	112
Ramshaw's pent-house on the roof of the Gotham	113
A bath on the roof of the Gotham	128
Jack Payne and Mr. Ramshaw "on the air"	129
To Mr. Ramshaw from—Squadron, 20th January, 1942	132
Official Mascot—Squadron, 19th January, 1942	133
Mr. Ramshaw and the Squadron of which he is Mascot	140
Mr. Ramshaw, a portrait	141
A Problem Picture: Mr. Ramshaw and the Lamp	144
Fifteen years—and still going strong	145
Wings for Victory	160

CHAPTER I

A FLYING SCOTSMAN GOES TO TOWN

FIFTEEN years ago two young Golden Eagles looked out from their eyrie over some of the grandest scenery in the Scottish Highlands. At the time of which we are writing they were almost fully fledged. Except for small greyish-white tufts on the tops of their heads they had lost practically all the down with which, in their earlier days, they had been covered. They were, in fact, nearing the stage when they would be making their way out into the world.

Had they been capable of thought and imagination, they would have spent a good deal of their time, one feels, in pondering their situation, and the probable next steps in their career: to which new position the first flight should take them, for instance. The piece of rock that jutted out about fifty yards to the left—and which seemed to be such a popular perch with their parents—might be, probably would be, attempted. And if that were negotiated successfully then the half-dead fir tree also frequently patronised by their parents—which grew by the side of the waterfall some hundred yards further on—ought not to be too trying. And if that were reached almost anything could be achieved.

It is possible that as the young Eagles watched the aerial evolutions of their parents some such ideas DID enter their heads, but in any case they contented themselves, for the time being, with remaining at home and in indulging in frequent bouts of "wing-flapping and upwards-jumping." In fact, they seemed to have little interest in anything else—except food.

One may wonder, too, if they appreciated the magnificent surroundings amongst which they lived. Three hundred feet below, at the base of their rock, a clump of widely-separated fir trees stood out darkly against the great purple drift of heather that swept through clusters

ALL BRITISH EAGLE

of white-stemmed birches to the shore of a typical Highland loch. From the far side of the loch the ground rose again. Deep crevasses, trickling burns, stretches of heather, fairy-green birches, sombre firs; higher and higher to the foot of a mountain range rising austere to dominate the scene.

The mountains were often strangely beautiful, especially in certain angles of sunlight when they became a series of designs in high-light and shadow that rose from a most inviting bed of beautifully undulating, velvety-green curves. Sometimes they were less attractive and became dim, indefinite shapes overhanging a flat, vaguely discernible earth. At other times—when rain or snow or mist was thick enough—they were completely invisible, and occasionally they regained their regal splendour by appearing—when the mist lay low—as precipitous islands towering above a still, white sea. As darkness closed in the picture would change again. All effect of perspective became less and less until completely lost. The delicately moulded mountains became silhouettes, black and forbidding, against the darkening sky.

It is doubtful, though, whether the young eagles noticed such phenomena.

Days and nights passed with periods of fog, sunshine, wind or rain, and they were still content to remain at home and to devour the food—mountain hare, rabbit or perhaps grouse—which was brought to the eyrie by their tireless parents. Now that they were almost full-grown they would sometimes rush at anything that might be brought to them, more perhaps for the fun of grabbing it than because they were desperately in need of sustenance, and would commence work on it themselves, tearing off and bolting great pieces instead of taking tiny portions from the tip of their mother's beak, as they had been in the habit of doing.

Had things proceeded normally they would certainly have ventured into the world in the very near future. But, at this juncture, Fate, in the shape of the owner of the

A FLYING SCOTSMAN GOES TO TOWN

forest, intervened. There were too many eagles on the forest, he said. Two nests, each with two young. Eight in all ! He would be the last man to wish to exterminate the King of birds, but one can have too much of a good thing. It would be best to send two of the young ones to some Zoo.

So the day came when a couple of braw Highlanders, armed with a rope and a couple of sacks, stood at the top of the eagle rock and made their dispositions concerning the capture of the eaglets. It was decided that one of them should be lowered to the nest, a distance of about 25 feet, should then seize one of the eaglets, put it in a sack, tie the sack on to the rope and shout to his companion to "Haul away." The man at the top of the rock was then to pull up this first sack, free it from the rope and lower the second one, which he would pull up upon receiving word that the remaining eaglet was safely enclosed.

No doubt all this would have been easy enough had the youngsters been small downy things without minds of their own, but these were great savage-looking creatures, ready to stand up and defend themselves. In fact, they looked more like mature eagles than young ones !

The man, whose lot it was to descend to the nest, received quite a shock when, having struggled and kicked helplessly for a while with insufficient rope and without a foothold, he at last stood upright and, looking down, saw these formidable customers facing him. The female even advanced a couple of feet in a sudden threatening movement, with raised hackles and flapping wings. At this the marauder shouted to his companion above (to reassure himself as much as for any other reason) that the young eagles were ready to fly, had been left too long, and would be away if he tried to catch them.

Perhaps, in his heart he was hoping they would fly—right out over the loch—so that there would be every justification for returning empty-handed and with a clear conscience. But no flight over the loch or anywhere else

ALL BRITISH EAGLE

was attempted. The eaglets continued to crouch in their corner and looked as though they contemplated launching a full-scale attack.

So there remained nothing for the marauder to do but to put into action the carefully thought-out plan. The sack was untied from the rope. So far so good. Now to catch the young eagle, the larger one—the female—first. Easier said than done, for, on seeing a hand stretched out towards her, she threw herself onto her back, and struck out wildly with her great talons. This move had been half expected by the Highlander, who slowly reached back for the sack, lowered it towards the eaglet, and danced it up and down in the hope that, exasperated, she would strike at it with her talons. This, in fact, is exactly what she did, and her would-be captor smiled to see her thus—hanging on to the sack, upside down.

Now was his chance. While with one hand he held up the sack, to which the eaglet was still clinging, he cautiously felt, with the other, for the bird's legs, grasped them—gently but **VERY FIRMLY**—by the heels, and—she was his helpless prisoner! Now to wrest the sack from her grip and to thrust her into it. Careful! Look out for those talons! Easy now! Yes, she's in! "Arlicht, Donal', ye cahn pull awa' the noo." How much more assured was this voice than that in which he had remarked that the young eagles were too well-grown to tackle!

And now, the female having been successfully disposed of, it became the male's turn. This proved a far easier operation. The same business of holding the sack towards him, of catching him by the legs after he had obtained hold, and of sending him up the cliff, was gone through, but with half the trouble. Being smaller—and less ferocious—he was a good deal easier to handle and control. And it might be that, even at his age, he had acquired that philosophical, imperturbable outlook which has been, and is to-day, such an outstanding feature of his character.

.

A FLYING SCOTSMAN GOES TO TOWN

By some strange coincidence I happened to call at the Offices of the Zoological Society in London to see Seth-Smith, then Curator of Birds, on the very day of the arrival of the young eagles. "By the way," Seth-Smith said to me in the course of conversation, "we've just received a couple of young Golden Eagles from Scotland. Would you like to see them?"

"Why, yes," I willingly assented, "where have you got them?"

"We've put 'em in the Birds-of-Prey-Aviary and they seem to be settling down all right."

When we reached the aviary we found that the eagles, in full view of a small crowd of people, were ardently pulling at great lumps of horse-flesh. Lambden, one of the keepers, joined us at this moment, and, although he is rather deaf, entered into the conversation which mainly concerned my desire to possess one of the eaglets. I explained that I didn't want to keep it in a cage, of course, but that I wanted to try my hand at training it, as eagles were trained for falconry in the Middle Ages, or, for that matter, as eagles are trained and flown in various parts of the world to-day. I also wanted to find out whether it would react more favourably than one we had liberated in Sutherlandshire a year before. I had disposed of her for the excellent reason that I felt pretty sure she would, sooner or later, have killed someone. A woman with a fur round her neck would have been a likely target for Grampian—as we called her—would not have had the least hesitation about going for the fur and would, in all probability, have sunk her talons into the wearer's neck at the same time. And that, as the saying is, would have been that! When handling her I had used an extremely heavy gauntlet fitted with a special leather sleeve, and, as an added precaution, had sometimes even worn a fencing-mask. I had reason to regret that I hadn't always worn it, for on two occasions she struck at my face and caused some very nasty wounds. The consequence of it all was that I was inoculated and stitched up and Grampian was turned loose.

ALL BRITISH EAGLE

I told all this to Seth-Smith, and the upshot was that, providing the owner of the forest from whence the eagles had come had no objection, I was to try my hand on one of them.

"I suppose you CAN train an eagle to hunt?" Seth-Smith had asked.

"Well, yes, I don't know why not," I had replied. "Grampian was ready enough to come to a lure. Flew very well, too. The only snag was that she proved so deuced awkward to handle. I don't see why an eagle, GIVEN PROPER CONDITIONS, shouldn't do well enough at rabbits, or even hares. Anyhow, I'd like to try the female. And, by the way, if she turns out to be awkward I'll send her back to you."

The owner of the forest from which the young eagles had come, having no objection to my trying my hand at training one of them, I duly reported at the Zoo and took possession of my new acquisition. I had, of course, made up my mind, as every falconer must instinctively make up his mind, that the new-comer should be treated with the greatest respect, the utmost gentleness, during the early stages of her training.

There must be no jerky, nervous movements. If she should bite my hand I should have to be quite nonchalant about it; which ought not to call for much self-restraint, since the bite of an eagle never amounts to a serious injury. The talons are the offensive weapons. I resolved that I would do everything possible to avoid upsetting her, in the hope that she would eventually become as tame as any parrot.

I don't think she ever was frightened of me. I know, that as her confidence in herself and her great strength developed, she acquired an awkward habit of grabbing at my ungloved hand if I happened to move it within range of her foot. She finally succeeded, one day, in getting a grip on it! It was an extremely unpleasant situation since she held my gloved hand, with the food in it, in one vice-like grip and my bare hand in the other! I could do nothing. And for a long time she held on.



ABOUT TO TAKE-OFF



RETURNING

A FLYING SCOTSMAN GOES TO TOWN

In the end, however, the food interested her so much that she forgot about my bare hand and relaxed her grip. At least I was free, but my hand was badly lacerated and quite numbed. This wouldn't do. I should have learned my lesson before. She must go back to the Zoo. I would try the male instead. So, off to the Zoo once more where Grampian II was re-deposited, and whence her brother was withdrawn.

So it came about that on a lovely afternoon in July, 1928, a third Golden eagle arrived at my home in Kent. How would THIS one react? Would it develop a habit of grabbing at one's bare hand? Would it, when I got it flying loose, send all onlookers rushing for cover? Would it grab people by the face? All I knew was that it was a male and that that might mean much. But how much?

From the very first it promised well. To my utter astonishment I succeeded in hooding it without any fuss, and it remained steady whilst I fitted jesses onto its legs and attached swivel and chain. Later that day it sat bare-headed and quite sedately on the bow-perch to which I had fastened its chain.

Incredible as it may seem, it even flew to the side of the cement pool I had filled with water and obviously contemplated a bath. As I crept quietly away it was busily preening itself.

A wonderful start for the first day.

At the end of a week the young eagle had become perfectly at home. It never really objected to visitors—as long as they remained at a respectful distance—and soon learned that it could not proceed further from its perch than was permitted by the combined length of jesses and chain. If feeding or indulging in a bath it would—unlike some hawks—carry on quite unconcernedly if onlookers gathered round.

As time went on it gained confidence and became more and more placid, had no objection to being stroked by a gentle hand, and would even nibble, in a playful way, at an outstretched finger. It became quite popular. Friends

ALL BRITISH EAGLE

would bring their children "to see the Eagle." Questions were asked about his age, his birth- or hatching-place, his weight and wing-spread, and, of course, his name. That, naturally, was the question most frequently put. "What's his name?" The reply, at that time, had to be, "I'm afraid he hasn't got one, though we did think of calling him 'Aquila.'"

Then, for a time, the inevitable query would be: "How's Aquila?" instead of "How's the eagle?"

But somehow Aquila didn't fit. "Destiny" was given a trial but with no better result.

What, then, SHOULD we call it? We'd got to call it SOME-thing. Couldn't SOME-body think of SOME-thing?

One of the eagle's chief admirers was my little daughter, Jean, then three years old. She grew exceedingly fond of the bird and would follow me about in case I might chance to be going into the Park to feed him or fill his bath.

"Are you going out to see the eagle?" she would ask.

"Yes, in a few minutes."

"May I come?"

She had no fear of the bird and would stroke its head and make kindly remarks to it. I do not know, but I am half inclined to believe that this daily routine has something to do with the eagle's subsequent reactions to the attentions of children.

One day, whilst stroking its glossy head and chatting to it, little Jean remarked, "I do think you're nice. You look like Mr. Ramshaw." I repeated what Jean had said to some of my friends, who, rather to my surprise, regarded it as being screamingly funny. "Looks like Mr. Ramshaw! MARvellous, I MUST tell old So-and-So." "Mr. Ramshaw! Oh, very good. And what a good name!" "Looks like old Ramshaw—so he does! Ha-ha-ha."

The story was repeated time and again, in some instances, we suspect, to the same people.

"DID you hear what Jean said about the eagle?" etc.,

MR. RAMSHAW'S EDUCATION

etc., and out would come the story, perhaps a little embellished, all over again.

Then, instead of "How's the eagle?" it would be "How's old Ramshaw?" or "Is Mr. Ramshaw quite fit?" or "Can I bring my little boy along to see Mr. Ramshaw?"

The name, in fact, had come to stay.

CHAPTER II

MR. RAMSHAW'S EDUCATION

AND so Mr. Ramshaw's education began. I knew that if, later on, he were to enjoy daily periods of freedom, and yet to be under such control that he would not sail off into the blue, he must be made thoroughly at home. He would have to become so accustomed to the sight of such strange objects as motor-cars, buses, bird-lovers, school-boys and ornithologists, that he would take them all for granted.

I therefore spent a part of each day carrying him about on my gloved arm, calling on various friends in the neighbourhood, visiting the blacksmith to see whether the new bow-perch was ready, or taking him to tea with relatives living on the Village Green. At times I would find an excuse for looking up my friend Leslie Hoyle, not because I was particularly anxious to see him, but because I wanted Ramshaw to get used to the yapping of Raf, the dog, which always gave tongue when it saw us walking up the drive. Although somewhat apprehensive at first Ramshaw learned to regard these outings as being quite a normal part of his life and ceased to be put out in the least by any of the unusual sights and sounds we encountered.

I made a point of hooding him several times every day, for I wanted him to accept the hood with the same equanimity as that with which he regarded yapping dogs and roaring motor-cars. The advantages of being able to hood a bird trained for falconry are enormous. Undisturbed

ALL BRITISH EAGLE

by whatever may be going on, the hooded falcon or eagle, being blindfolded, sits still and runs no risk of damaging its feathers or nervous system by its efforts to get on the wing. Strangely enough a bird which has been carefully "made to the hood" has not the least objection to the leather cap being fitted onto its head. Ramshaw belongs to that class.

Next came the task of encouraging him to fly to whatever formed the day's rations so that, later on, sailing about over the tree-tops, he would return to any lure that might be thrown out. This phase in a hawk's training is known among falconers as "making to the lure."

Such a lure is usually a rough imitation of the bird's natural quarry, although in actual practice almost any flesh will serve—half a rabbit, a piece of beef, a chicken's neck or some such delicacy. During the early lessons I, of course, took the precaution of attaching a good thick line to Ramshaw's jesses so that there would be no chance of his making off if he should be suddenly frightened.

In the beginning Ramshaw took little interest in the lure when it was thrown out towards him. Even when it was laid literally at his feet he would continue to ignore it, partly because it was a strange procedure, partly because he wasn't hungry. Eventually, however, he learned that it was in this way that his rations were to be presented to him, and would deign to partake of a light meal.

In a few weeks' time his technique had improved so much that the procedure would be roughly as follows: Ramshaw would be carried into the park—a clothes-line with a flat-iron attached to its furthest end would be tied to his jesses and he would be placed on a molehill or other low perch. After allowing him a few moments in which to take stock of the situation one of us would throw the lure onto the turf three or four yards away from him. As a rule he would look at the tempting offering for a few seconds as though mildly interested, only to turn away to regard the distant view. The lure would then be withdrawn and again thrown towards him, to land, this time,

MR. RAMSHAW'S EDUCATION

less than a yard away. Ramshaw, by this time vaguely intrigued, would spread his wings, lean forward and take a running jump on to his meal. "THAT's better! Now he's beginning to understand," would be the joyful comment.

Every day the tuition was continued, the distance that he jumped and eventually flew to the lure being gradually increased. It is remarkable what can be achieved by such regular training, for at the end of three weeks his attitude, his whole outlook, had entirely changed. By the twenty-second day one could hardly have believed him to be the same bird. He could be taken into the park and allowed to fly on to whatever perch he might fancy—a gate, the top of a post, a fallen tree-trunk, or any other obvious vantage point that was handy. The line being arranged so that there was the least possible chance of its becoming entangled, I would commence to swing the lure in circles, accompanying its revolutions with loud shrill whistles. In response Ramshaw would launch himself into the air and flying strongly towards the lure, would land on it with a determined crash. How splendid he looked with his glossy plumage, erect carriage and keen expression as he proudly guarded the prize!

"Standing to attention," I called it when, years later, he stood thus before an audience.

Well, he now knew what "flying to the lure" meant. In future he was flown loose, and the fact that the line was no longer necessary made Ramshaw's daily exercise a much less irksome business. Indeed, it was a pleasure to carry him into the park, cast him off, when an open space had been reached, and watch him fly to some more or less distant tree-top without any risk of the line becoming entangled. As time went on Ramshaw's style improved enormously. He would often make a sort of circular tour over the tree-tops, as though enjoying his mastery of the air. He also became quite expert at half closing his wings and slipping through the outer branches of a tree with a view to reaching the less tangled and larger limbs within. Sometimes, as he sat on a branch, high up, in a

ALL BRITISH EAGLE

leafy oak, he would be quite invisible to us—obscured as he was by the thick foliage. I might be three or four hundred yards away, but had only to whistle and commence to swing the lure when he would burst through the greenery enveloping him and come sailing along towards me. If I replaced the lure in the falconer's bag and walked on, for a while he would circle overhead enquiringly before pitching on a nearer tree. All the while he would keep a sharp eye on me in case the lure should suddenly be thrown out. Needless to say, he was quickly after it when it was, and generally succeeded in grabbing it even if I tried to pull it aside at the psychological moment.

After a few weeks of such exercise he became a much more adroit flier and would follow me from tree to tree on a walk of two or three miles.

I might be half a mile ahead of him—maybe on the other side of a hill—before whistling. Yet, in answer to the familiar call, he would come sailing along to look down on me as he passed overhead. So skilful did he finally become that, having obtained impetus by swooping down from a tall tree, he would turn on to his back to catch the lure if I threw it high into the air. Such trick-flying, as well as foot-work exercises, improved his technique to such an extent that one day, as we were crossing a rough field, he caught his first rabbit. It started from a tuft of grass some fifteen feet ahead of us. Ramshaw was after it almost as soon as it showed itself, overhauling and bowling it over just before it reached cover.

This was the first time I had ever seen an eagle take wild quarry of any kind, and I was tremendously excited about it. He had done it so neatly, too. I felt that it was such an achievement that I wrote to some of my friends that evening telling them about it, and even sent a telegram, containing the stupendous news, to a co-falconer.

During the following three months Ramshaw kept himself, and us, quite well supplied with rabbits. It was not unusual for him to catch four or five in the course of

MR. RAMSHAW'S EDUCATION

an afternoon. Although he would sometimes succeed in bagging one when flown from my arm, we discovered that he acquitted himself in a much more satisfactory—more stylish, more efficient—way if he started from a lofty branch : the mere fact of his dropping from a height increasing his speed enormously and enabling him to make incredibly quick turns. In fact, the greater his speed, the greater his manoeuvrability. Ramshaw's prowess became quite a topic of conversation among local ornithologists and falconers. Sometimes I was asked to take him along so that he might demonstrate his dexterity on some near-by estate or farm. I suppose the most spectacular show he ever put up was when—with quite a crowd of people looking on—he caught three hares in one afternoon, a hare being far more difficult to take than a rabbit.

As his fame spread I began to receive requests that he should accompany me on my lecture tours, and that he should make a personal appearance on the stage. I felt I couldn't comply, for I disliked the idea of his being put into a crate and being transported by rail as much as I shrank from the thought of carrying him, in public, on my arm. Were I to adopt the first method he would run the risk of damaging his primary and tail feathers, and if the second were tried he would be certain to attract the attention of people of all ages who would ask the familiar questions as to his age, his weight and name.

However, I decided to take him along to a show I was giving at a cinema in Sevenoaks for since we had only a short distance to go, there would be no difficulty about his transportation. And there was no difficulty; I merely sat on the back seat of the car with Ramshaw—hooded—on my arm whilst someone else drove. Ramshaw's appearance caused a real sensation. I believe his presence contributed as much towards the success of the performance as the films did, and in spite of the fact that he did very little except to fly a few feet from the top of the piano to my gloved hand.

Nevertheless, even this modest gesture brought forth

ALL BRITISH EAGLE

rounds of applause. After the show quite a crowd of people, grown-ups and children, gathered round to inspect him at close quarters. Some of the braver ones even dared to stroke his glossy back. Outside in the street we, with some local celebrities, were photographed by a Press photographer. It would appear that this was the point at which Ramshaw's stage career began.

Early in the following January I set out on a lecture tour in the United States. After much cogitation I decided to take Ramshaw with me. I dared not leave him in the care of friends who had no experience of handling such pets, and I could not possibly risk his coming to an untimely end whilst I was three thousand miles away. Of course, I realised that all sorts of untoward incidents might, doubtless would, occur on the tour, but that, come what might, I should at least be on hand to try to do something about it.

Another reason why I felt inclined to take him was that I knew my ornithologically-disposed friends over there would be tremendously interested in such an unusual character.

So Ramshaw went along. Our journey across the Atlantic was as pleasant as a peace-time crossing of the Atlantic usually is. Ramshaw, who appeared in the lounge from time to time, made many friends and remained in the best of health. On our arrival in New York he was provided with previously arranged quarters at the Central Park Zoo—that is, of course, while we were in the city. On occasions he would spend a night at the British Commonwealth Club which, at that time, was on 49th Street, where Radio City now stands.

He was at once a "smash hit," as they put it over there. The first public appearance he ever made in the States was at the American Museum of Natural History. Actually, I had determined not to take him with me, for it would mean negotiating revolving doors and elevators; getting him into and out of taxis; arranging a perch for him on the stage as well as procuring the right sort of meat and a bag to put it into. None-the-less he appeared.

MR. RAMSHAW'S EDUCATION

It was like this : I was having lunch at the Museum with Dr. Chapin, Clyde-Fisher, George Goodwin and some others a few days before we were scheduled to appear, when George asked me whether Ramshaw was comfortable at the Zoo.

"Oh, yes, he's got grand quarters," I replied. "Old Joe has taken quite a fancy to him."

"Why don't you bring him along to your lecture on Friday," George continued, "or would it be too risky?"

"Not too *risky*," I answered. "Too much blinking trouble."

"He'd be scared anyway, I suppose," George went on.

"No, I don't think so," I retorted, rather nettled by George's opinion of Ramshaw. "I took him to one or two shows in England and he made rather a good impression."

"You've actually had him in front of an audience, then?" George enquired incredulously. "What does he do?"

"Oh, nothing much. I get him to fly to my hand across the stage and so on," I answered.

"Fly to your hand ! You don't mean that you fly him loose ?"

"Of course."

"Aren't you scared he might grab someone in the audience ?"

"Oh, good Heavens, no. He's an amazing bloke. I almost wish I'd brought him along to-day. He doesn't mind an audience a bit."

"Well, I don't know," one of the party broke in, "but it looks to me as though this eagle might be the high-spot of the show. I'd even say it would be O.K. not to use the movies, but, Gosh darn it, let's see the eagle do its stuff." So, as has already been recounted, Ramshaw made his first appearance in the United States. He put up a better show than he had previously done at performances in England ; flying across the stage from my hand to a perch we had fixed up and back again to me, just as when we were training him in the park, only on this occasion the

ALL BRITISH EAGLE

perch was draped with the "Stars and Stripes." Overnight he became famous. On the morning following I was much intrigued by the acclamations of the Press. But, after all, this was "positively the first public appearance of a live eagle on any stage!"

In future, Ramshaw appeared at all the shows we put on: Chicago, Philadelphia, Toledo, Saginaw, San Francisco, Washington and the rest. Since the distressing as well as the amusing incidents which occurred during this first American tour have already been described in detail elsewhere, it would be rather out-of-place to re-tell them here. I might, though, just say that the funniest thing I saw was the face of the chamber-maid who, having walked in on Ramshaw as he sat in the bath-tub, rushed, incapable of sound, into the corridor and that the most disturbing occasion was when we found ourselves locked out one night—with the temperature 20 below zero—on the roof of a Toronto hotel.

Nevertheless, we both survived the tour, and returned to England at the end of April to enjoy the much greater fun of making a new film, of hunting rabbits and living the lives of British country gentlemen.

CHAPTER III

CONCERNING AMERICA

FOR the next eleven years Ramshaw's life was spent very largely in enjoying periods of liberty; acting in films; appearing on the stage and accompanying me on annual lecture tours in the United States. That the business of transporting him across the Atlantic, of finding suitable food and accommodation for him on the ship, was fraught with difficulties goes without saying. We were beset with dilemmas on the actual tours too, for we spent many consecutive days and nights on rail journeys between such widely separated destinations as Montreal, St. Louis,

CONCERNING AMERICA

Seattle, Salt Lake City, Daytona, San Francisco, Philadelphia, New Orleans, Chicago and Washington.

Sometimes—if there were little time before our next appearance—we travelled by air. Ramshaw's first trip on a 'plane was memorable—if only for the fact that he travelled free of charge! We were in San Francisco, and I had received word that the journey to fill a "date" in Los Angeles in three days' time would have to be made by air. On the evening preceding this Los Angeles engagement we were to appear in Oakland—across the Bay from San Francisco—and since we were due to perform in Los Angeles at eleven o'clock on the following morning, it would be impossible to be there in time if we went by train. I, accordingly, called at the offices of the Air Line Company to make reservations for Ramshaw and myself. I was told, almost brusquely, that I should not be permitted to take live stock.

"But I am going to Los Angeles to lecture for the Ebell Club!" I protested. "And I must take the eagle along. He's part of the show."

"Sorry. We can't take live stock," was the terse reply.

"I don't know what will happen if he's not there to do his stuff," I pleaded. "He's been featured on the programme and they've been looking forward to his coming."

"Very sorry.. We can't take live stock."

Suddenly an idea flashed across my mind. It was worth trying! "It's possible that you are making a mistake," I suggested, "for this would be a wonderful publicity stunt: how about 'The King of Birds relies on Human Wings!'"

For a few moments the official regarded me fixedly. Then, in a softer tone he replied slowly: "Say, I believe you've got something there. Hm-m-m-m; that's a pretty nice idea. . . . 'The King of Birds relies on Human Wings!' Well, well . . . Say, listen, could we get a picture of your eagle carrying one of our airplanes?" Then, seeing my look of astonishment, he added laughingly, "A model, of course!"

ALL BRITISH EAGLE

I assented readily, eager enough to agree to anything within reason. "When would you like your photographer to come along?"

On the following morning a photographer called at the Fairmont Hotel to see me. In addition to his camera he had brought with him a small model aeroplane with a wing-span of about four feet. His idea was to get a photograph of Ramshaw flying across the room carrying this aeroplane in his feet!! I am still not clear as to what purpose he could have put the result—if he had been able to get it—unless it was to suggest that people might be borne through the air by some colossal power. However, whatever his idea may have been, it did not materialise, for Ramshaw, in spite of our efforts to make him seize the model, obstinately refused to have anything to do with it.

Nevertheless, as a result of it all, Ramshaw and I made the trip by air, and—as has already been recorded, the latter travelled without charge.

During these years of travel Ramshaw has covered countless thousands of miles and has met people of every conceivable type: film stars, night-club queens, prohibitionists, bootleggers, millionaires, cowboys, cotton kings, red Indians, and the countless other interesting personalities that one meets on a protracted tour of the United States. It goes without saying that on every tour I was continually worrying about Ramshaw's welfare, and not without reason, for most distressing incidents occurred from time to time. More than once I arrived at some railway station on the completion of a journey to find, when I enquired at the baggage room, that Ramshaw's crate was not to be found, and that he had either been left behind or had, inadvertently, been allowed to go on to the next stop, perhaps scores of miles away. Very occasionally for some unexplained reason, although I think it had to do with over-feeding, he was train-sick. Sometimes, when in some country district, I would let him have a fly round, and on several occasions he went away after some potential victim:

CONCERNING AMERICA

a rabbit in Massachusetts, a chicken in Florida, an opossum in Indiana—and generally succeeded in making a kill. I was always filled with dread as I rushed along to retrieve him before he was shot ; for eagles, as well as many quite large hawks of the buzzard persuasion, are usually referred to as Chicken Hawks, and generally shot on sight.

But this sort of thing didn't happen very frequently. Ramshaw was not always a source of anxiety and worry and our visits to the United States were not by any means so nerve-racking as these accounts might suggest. On the contrary for the major part of the time we enjoyed ourselves immensely and met the most charming people in New York, Chicago, Philadelphia, San Francisco, Washington, and countless other cities. Many of the incidents which occurred—apart from Ramshaw's activities—are unforgettable : the afternoon's drive from the Orange Groves of a Californian valley to the top of snow-clad mountains : The " Bald " eagles of Delaware : the forest fire in Pennsylvania : the log cabin in the snow at Wolfboro, New Hampshire—and how many others ? But most clearly remembered of all is that summer that we spent on Gardiner's Island where, guests of the late Clarence Mackay, we lived with five cheery Scotsmen whose job was to look after the pheasants, deer, rabbits and wild fowl that frequented the island.

How astounded I was to find that one of the Scotsmen, Jimmy Eccles, was actually the son of the Eccles—head stalker to the Duke of Sutherland—who had helped us release the female eagle—Grampian—which we had turned loose in Sutherlandshire.

My principal intention in visiting the Island was to procure a comprehensive film of the home life of the Osprey (or Fish-hawk, as it is called in the States) which bred in Scotland until about forty years ago, but which was finally exterminated as a British breeding species by the persecutions of collectors.

I believe Gardiner's Island—off Montauk Point, Long Island—to be the site of the most remarkable Osprey

ALL BRITISH EAGLE

colony in the world. Their nests were almost everywhere ; in trees, on fallen tree-trunks, on buildings, on rocks out at sea, even on the flat sandy shore itself. Some of the nests built on the beach were enormous affairs—huge piles of sticks, wooden slats, bits of wreckage, straw bottle-cases, even discarded pieces of clothing. Others were quite insignificant, not much more than a big plover's nest, whilst others, the more normal ones, were about the size of an average swan's nest. Some of the tree-nests were tremendous too, almost as large as eagles' eyries, and amongst the outer framework of several of these, purple grackles were nesting. A variety of other interesting birds also occurs on the Island : Grey-blue night herons or "quarks," as the Scotsmen called them ; tiny green herons ; terns ; short-eared and barred owls ; harriers and many other smaller species. Occasionally we would come across a yellow warbler's nest containing an egg of the parasitic cow-bird—a bird which, although utterly unlike the European cuckoo in both shape and colour, also indulges in the practice of letting others rear its family.

A spotted sandpiper had its nest within a few feet of the hide from which we filmed the osprey family, and once a bald eagle visited the Island. Any predatory bird—whether eagle, falcon, accipiter or buteo—which was indiscreet enough to try to make the Island its home, ran an excellent chance of coming to grief in a short while, for the Scotsmen, although they refrained from interfering with the ways of the fish-eating ospreys, were all against having birds of prey as guests on their Island, and made short work of any with which they came in contact.

Of all the ospreys' nests that we investigated with a view to subsequent photography, we chose one that seemed to be the most suitable for three reasons :

It was built on the shore with a hill as a background.

The birds seemed to be considerably tamer than most of those we had watched.

It contained three eggs which I judged were due to hatch in the near future.

CONCERNING AMERICA

Then there was a rag-doll's head on the nest—brought along by one of the birds as a decoration for the home—which we regarded as a mascot.

I shall never forget that summer on Gardiner's Island : those splendid Scotsmen ; the swimming ; the soft-shelled crab feasts down on the shore ; the sultry evenings ; the glorious sunsets, the fireflies, the calling of night herons, and the privacy of it all—for there were no human beings in the Island except ourselves. Lastly, and most important of all, I felt that I had achieved something, for the films I got of the life of the osprey were ahead of anything I had previously done.

Ramshaw must have enjoyed it too. He indulged in frequent flights over the Island, and generally wound up by returning to the lure without encountering any untoward incident. Sometimes, however, he would venture too close to an osprey's nest. Then—just as missel thrushes will "barrack" an owl that has chanced to enter their area—the ospreys, screaming with exasperation, would endeavour to scare Ramshaw away with a demonstration of violence. An osprey is a magnificent flier and is capable of putting in very hard stoops. Incidentally, I remember seeing one of them stoop from a considerable height at a night heron which was flying through a "prohibited area." It hit the latter such a clout that the heron was knocked out and came twisting and fluttering to earth. It had a broken wing.

One of the ospreys timed its stoop so nicely that it struck Ramshaw with an audible "whop" as it shot by. This seemed to have the effect of infuriating our hero, who, seeing another coming at him like a dive bomber, did a half back-somersault, and, whilst upside-down, snatched with lightning foot-stroke at the attacker. Once, at least, he succeeded in dislodging a handful of feathers from his adversary. A sort of sideways roll brought him right side up again and he was ready for the next attacker. These tactics had, at least, the effect of persuading the ospreys to keep at a safer distance.

ALL BRITISH EAGLE

Ramshaw later showed his contempt for them by pitching and settling on a nest and destroying and eating a half-grown young osprey! This was, of course, a disgraceful thing to do. It was not, however, the only crime he committed on the Island, for the wicked fellow caught and killed two pheasants on different occasions, though I was discreet enough not to mention these incidents to my Scottish friends.

So, even during this happy period, I experienced pangs of anxiety and apprehension. Particularly on one occasion. It was Ramshaw again!

I had had a most successful day in the hide, and, as I made my way homeward, congratulated myself on my good fortune. I had filmed the arrival of the male osprey at the nest with a fish in his talons. The female was there, with the family, awaiting him. When she had taken the fish from him he had continued to stand on the side of the nest whilst the food was distributed amongst the family, and I had exposed about 200 feet of film on the scene which ended with the male spreading his wings and sailing out over the sea. As I drew near the little house at which we lived, all agog to tell the news of my good luck, I saw Jimmy Eccles running towards me. I was just going to shout my news to him when he disturbed my complacency by roaring at me: "Mr. Ramshaw's away!" Mr. Ramshaw away? Here was a nice kettle of fish!

In all probability he would already have caught a rabbit or a pheasant or another young osprey.

It was nearly tea-time, and I hadn't had anything to eat since breakfast. Nevertheless, there was nothing for it but to go and look for him. Putting aside all thoughts of tea, I hurriedly collected my gauntlet, Ramshaw's hood and a lure which, I remember, consisted of the hind part of a cotton-tail rabbit, and set out to search for him.

For a couple of hours I wandered about the Island, whistling and swinging the lure. Every now and then



A SHORT LECTURE ON THE HABITS OF THE EAGLE



WITH THE U.S. CUSTOMS

CONCERNING AMERICA

I would stand and listen intently—as one does when seeking a lost hawk—hoping to hear the tinkle of the little bell which he wears on one leg. Not a sound. I suppose I walked some seven or eight miles—the Island is ten miles long by three wide and I did the major part of it—but neither saw nor heard anything that might even suggest his whereabouts.

At length, as darkness closed in, I returned, famished and dejected, to our headquarters. That evening we talked only of what might have become of Ramshaw. He MIGHT have been lying doggo, a half-eaten rabbit in his talons ; he MIGHT have flown across to the mainland—after all, it isn't so far ; he MIGHT have been on some osprey's nest at the top of a tree, replete with food (having eaten the occupants), and consequently indifferent to my pleadings or the attractiveness of the lure. Before we turned in I decided I must be up before daylight to scour the Island afresh.

I set out again just as dawn was breaking and made my way towards the southern end of the Island. It was more open there, and as we had often let Ramshaw fly over the sand dunes I thought that, being familiar with that particular part of the island, he might have returned to it. Anyhow, I had got to go SOMEWHERE and might as well try there as anywhere else. On my way I continually swung the lure and whistled or stood to gaze about me. Every Marsh-hawk (harrier) that I saw sailing along over the distant swampy stretches, made my heart jump ; each one looked so like Ramshaw ! Occasionally even an osprey seemed, momentarily, to be the truant. But there was no sign of him, and in the end I returned, disappointed and exceedingly hungry, to breakfast. I hardly knew what to do for the rest of the day. Ought I to get on with the filming of the ospreys ? If I didn't I might miss something of outstanding interest. Yet I didn't feel much like photography. If Ramshaw were still on the Island I felt that it was up to me to locate him. There were so many creatures on which he could feed—and so easily too—

ALL BRITISH EAGLE

that he would all the more quickly revert to the wild state, and, in all probability, make his way to the mainland.

So, once more, I set out. I tried the northern end of the island first. There is a large nesting colony of terns there, and if Ramshaw were anywhere handy the terns, by demonstrations of uneasiness, would be sure to let me know. Again, there was no sign of him. So I tried the wooded part, nearer the centre, where I had been on the previous evening. Still no sign. The day wore on and since there was not a trace of him I concluded, reluctantly enough, that my old friend had taken to soaring which might mean that he had sailed away over to the mainland. In that case he would undoubtedly finish his career with a charge of shot.

Nevertheless I spent the first half of the following day in once again wandering about, swinging the lure and whistling—but with no success.

I returned to headquarters for lunch—a thing I very seldom did, and during the dismal meal, offered—half-jokingly—a reward of twenty dollars to anyone of the company who could locate our missing friend. It was hardly likely that the reward would be won since the boys were already doing all they could to trace him.

It looked as though I had seen the last of Ramshaw, and although I could hardly resist the desire to have another search for him I decided that I really must try for more pictures of the ospreys.

After lunch, Edward Cairns, who was in charge of the Island, took pity on me and drove me along in a Ford van to within a few yards of the osprey's nest. I got out of the van and crept as unobtrusively as possible into the hide. It was, perhaps, because of Edward's noisy departure in the van from the vicinity that, within a few minutes of his going, the female osprey returned to her family and permitted me to start on a new series of pictures.

I was only in the hide for some forty minutes, and during that time had exposed all the 200 feet of film that I had brought with me—and on pictures which included all the

CONCERNING AMERICA

members of the osprey family—father, mother, and the three children. How happy I should have been if only Ramshaw had been safely at home!

When both parent birds had calmly sailed off into the blue, I crept out and started for headquarters much earlier than I had expected I should. I walked homewards swinging the lure and whistling as usual.

As I drew nearer to our home I saw one of the Scotsmen—John, it was—running towards me, gesticulating wildly. Surely he hadn't . . . ! Then I heard him shout, "I've seen him. I know where he is. Don't waste any time, he may be off again." I didn't waste any time. I put down my camera and bawled in my loudest voice: "Which way?" "Over on the hill," he shouted back. "Look! See those ospreys stooping at something? That's him!" I don't suppose I really need have hurried as I did, but I felt that if only I could actually get up to him I could get him to come to me.

And there—sure enough—he was! not more than a mile from our house, perched quite unconcernedly in an oak tree whilst a pair of ospreys did their utmost to scare him off by making dashing swoops towards him.

"Come on, old chap," I called in what I hoped was a free and easy voice, although I was almost delirious at seeing him again. "Come on. Here's your food," at the same time throwing out the portion of rabbit I was using as a lure. But, quite obviously, Ramshaw wasn't interested in food, had evidently gorged himself to repletion, for he ignored my entreaties and remained serenely on his perch. For some time I continued to throw out the lure and to call to him—although I could clearly see that his crop was much distended. Finally, I decided that, since he wouldn't come to me, I—or one of the Scotsmen—must go to him. It was not a difficult tree to climb, and I undertook the job myself; in fact, I got to within a couple of feet of my old friend without any undue difficulty. I must admit, though, that I felt a little sceptical about being able to take hold of his jesses, for I thought it quite likely

ALL BRITISH EAGLE

that he might resent the puffings and wheezings and crackings of branches and decide to decamp to some more tranquil spot. However I had no trouble. I got a firm hold on his jesses, contrived to get him to step onto my glove and even to remain there as I carried him, very slowly, very carefully, to the foot of the tree where Edward, Jimmy, and John were waiting to give me a hand. Need I say that I returned to headquarters in an elated state of mind? So elated that I was delighted to hand John the twenty dollars' reward!

This incident was sufficiently trying but was almost insignificant compared with what happened on a subsequent tour—and in the heart of New York City. We then had our base at the Gotham Hotel—where the British Club is located—which stands on the corner of Fifth Avenue and 55th Street. The roof of the hotel was Ramshaw's playground.

In summer time this elevated position is a "roof garden" where the elite can sit and breathe the clean air, get an uninterrupted view of the sky and sip their cool drinks. Here, since the place was deserted in winter time, Ramshaw, attached to a wooden tub filled with earth and dead plants, was able to pass the greater part of each day whilst we were in the city. Like his summer-time human counterparts he, too, could breathe the crisp air; gaze up at the sky, and, instead of sipping drinks, enjoy the shower bath which we provided. Incidentally he seemed to be much intrigued by the attentions of a wild duck hawk—or peregrine—which frequented a near-by building and which would sometimes linger to scream—or even half-heartedly stoop—at him as it passed.

In the evening of the particular day on which this most fearful incident occurred we were to appear at Reading, a town in Pennsylvania, and, having packed the films, evening clothes and so on, I went out onto the roof to pick up Ramshaw and put him into his crate. To my horror he had gone!

Half his chain—which had broken at about the middle—



THE CROWNED EAGLE AT HOME



THE MARTIAL EAGLE ABROAD

CONCERNING AMERICA

was lying there still firmly attached to the tub ; the other half had, together with Ramshaw, disappeared. I looked round with a horrid feeling of hopelessness swelling within me, although I half expected to see him perched on some near-by buildings. But I could not see him anywhere.

I suppose I stood there for some time whilst thoughts of the places to which I had promised to take him flashed through my mind. How should I explain his absence ? Could I expect ever to see him again ?

From the roof of the Gotham Hotel—as anyone who knows New York can easily imagine—there is a grand view of Central Park, Fifth Avenue, The Hudson River, New Jersey, 59th St. Bridge, and of countless famous buildings ; the Empire State, Rockefeller Centre, the Chrysler Tower, Tudor City. What a place in which to lose an eagle ! As I stood there—the feeling of hopelessness increasing—I saw, away over the East River—that is, the water between New York and Long Island—my colleague sailing along quite easily with something hanging from beneath him—the length of chain, of course. I immediately started to whistle as loudly as I could and to throw the gauntlet into the air—hoping he would suspect it to be some sort of a lure. It was all to no purpose, for he continued on his way, mounting higher and higher into the air until, at last, dwarfed by distance and height to the size of a pigeon, he disappeared over the top of Radio City. I dashed down the stairs to the 21st floor, collected my field glasses, rushed to the elevator doors, pushed the bell, and in a few moments was on the ground floor. Then down Fifth Avenue and along 49th Street to Radio City where I took an Express Elevator to Lowell Thomas's office on the 75th floor.

From this height and from the domain of one who knew Ramshaw well and who would consequently do all he could to help, I hoped to get a glimpse of the truant. I could not see him anywhere although, with the help of my field glasses I searched every roof-top, every church spire, every tower-like building. Some half-an-hour later I returned

ALL BRITISH EAGLE

disconsolately to the Gotham, naturally concluding that I had seen the last of my old friend. It had been worrying enough when I had lost him on Gardiner's Island—but New York City !! And I had to catch the train for Reading. I just had time to find Major Charles Tebay in the British Club and to tell him that Ramshaw was loose.

"Ramshaw loose," he repeated in a horrified tone, "What on earth are you going to do?" I told him that I must leave instantly to catch the train for Reading, and added, "Here's his hood, Charles, and here's the glove. For Heaven's sake do what you can to get him back." With this parting shot I rushed out of the hotel and dived into a taxi. As I was about to commence my talk at Reading, and had explained at length the heart-breaking story of Ramshaw's escape, a telegram was handed to me. It contained the cryptic message "Ramshaw safely home unharmed. Charles."

The story of Ramshaw's recapture is worth repeating here. Charles had rung up William Feakins, my manager, to tell him of the catastrophe and straightway the police had been notified. All police cars in New York City had been informed by radio that a tame eagle was at large and that a reward was offered for its recapture. "Calling all cars—Calling all cars—Eagle loose—Eagle loose."

Some hours later Ramshaw, probably after an ineffective attempt to catch a pigeon, had pitched on a taxi-cab on Madison Avenue. The driver of the cab, terrified by the sight of such a visitor, leapt from his seat and had rushed up to a police officer. "Say, officer, there's an eagle on my cab," he shouted. "Looks as if its going to grab a child." The policeman at once realised who Ramshaw was, and, with the taxi-driver following nervously at his heels, hurried to the abandoned cab. By this time a good-sized crowd had collected, although nervous mothers, with their babies clasped to their bosoms, were hurrying to a safer distance. Meanwhile, the policeman and the driver, none too sure of Ramshaw's possible reactions, held a consultation which led to the conclusion

CONCERNING AMERICA

that their best plan would be to approach the rogue from the rear, throw a coat over him and thus have him at a disadvantage. This ruse, if a trifle crude, had, at least, the desired effect, for the helpless Ramshaw, his talons buried in the thick overcoat, was hurried off to a police station where he was placed in very close confinement—in a much too small wooden container. The police had then phoned William (Pop) Feakins; Feakins had phoned the Gotham, the Gotham had notified Charles, and Charles had jumped into a taxi and driven to the police station concerned. Not so long afterwards Ramshaw was safely back in his pent-house on the roof of the Gotham, and I was reading Charles' cable to the audience in Reading. Pa.

Somehow or other the Press got hold of the story of Ramshaw's escapade, and the most amusing head-lines appeared in some of the papers the following day: "Cop and Cabbie bag Eagle on Madison Avenue," "Noted visitor stopping between flights at the Gotham," "Eagle that caused a panic."

Photographs of Charles and Ramshaw appeared in several papers, and some of the more facetious members of the British Club congratulated me on the success of my publicity stunt!

But to return to our sojourn on Gardiner's Island: I continued to film the young ospreys until they finally made their way out into the world. Ramshaw and I returned to Britain in August of that year, together with four full-grown young ospreys which, later on (and having made sure that they could fend for themselves) I turned loose in Inverness-shire.

I also brought back in the same year a female American "Bald" Eagle; the bird which is the emblem of the United States, and which, in fact, has pure white feathers on its head and neck. She was given to me by the Director of the Washington Zoo, who had seemed somewhat sceptical as to whether I should succeed in taming her—particularly as she had been captured in the mature, wild state.

ALL BRITISH EAGLE

"No one has tamed the American Eagle yet," he told me, and smilingly added "And I don't suppose a Britisher will do it."

CHAPTER IV

IN WHICH MR. RAMSHAW MEETS TWO SOUTH AFRICANS

TRAINING Miss America—as we called the American Eagle—proved to be a much more trying business than I had expected it would be. Not only was she recalcitrant and awkward to handle but she also developed a most disturbing habit, when being carried on the gloved arm, of suddenly shooting her head forward and nipping a piece out of one's face. Not a big piece, it must be understood, but the habit was extremely irritating.

I had made up my mind that, if it were humanly possible, I would tame her, particularly in view of what her donor had said.

I spent a lot of time on her, carrying her about, encouraging her to eat while in distracting surroundings, and with people, dogs, and so on, near by. Thirteen weeks passed before I dared trust her loose, but, once free of the encumbering line, she soon became accustomed to flying long distances to the lure, mounting into the sky and even enjoying aerial acrobatics with Ramshaw. I remember well the first time we decided to fly both of them together. The fact that these two eagles were obviously disposed to be on the friendliest terms suggested to us that it might be a good idea to let them both go at the same time, and to try for moving pictures of whatever might take place. Of course we had no sort of idea as to what WOULD happen ; they might take after a rabbit if we should happen to turn one up ; they might pitch, like a couple of love-birds side by side on a branch ; they might elope and we might watch them disappear into oblivion over the downs, or they might go off in different directions in pursuit of different objectives, so that we might well lose one of them, it being

INTRODUCING TWO SOUTH AFRICANS

unlikely that we could keep an eye on both. However, we thought we might get some unusual pictures and decided to try our luck. Two volunteers with cameras were detailed to take up their positions at what should be advantageous spots—to be in readiness to record anything interesting that might take place. One of my nephews, Norman Knight, to-day with the Eighth Army, and myself shouldered—as it were—an eagle apiece and proceeded to get them going. “All ready?” “Yes.” “All right, here we go.” And one of the cameras whirled as the eagles took off.

As I have mentioned, none of us could know what was going to happen, and we were so intrigued by what actually did occur that the cameramen, both of them, only got going in time to record the latter part of the scene. The two eagles, each on outstretched and intermittently flapping wings, gradually rose higher and higher into the air until, almost in the clouds, they commenced a little game of their own, a sort of “touch last”; stooping at one another, shifting, throwing up, dodging, twisting and thoroughly enjoying themselves. Still higher they went. Sometimes they were almost obscured by the clouds. Would they vanish completely? What a thought! Hoping to attract their attention whilst I tried to get the lure out of the bag, I whistled as shrilly and loudly as I could. To my amazement—and both cameras were going by this time—the two eagles ceased their antics and, in response to my whistling dropped literally out of the clouds, racing down to me and swinging, one after the other, on to my one outstretched arm. It was a magnificent show, the sort of thing, I suppose, I shall never see again. There was no question as to their having been attracted by food, for they had returned to the empty glove.

Miss America was a very graceful and buoyant flier; not so dexterous as Ramshaw at catching quarry but, on the wing, exceedingly pleasing to watch. It was much to my regret that, about eight months after our return from the United States, I was obliged to find her a new home, for I was to visit my daughter, Jean, who was then under

ALL BRITISH EAGLE

the care of my sister, Winifred Maasdrop of Stellenbosch, near Cape Town. So Miss America took up her temporary quarters in the Zoological Gardens at Regents Park.

I hoped that, during my stay in South Africa, I should be able to film the home-life of the rare Martial Eagle (*Polemaëtus Bellicosus*). My adventures, whilst engaged in this endeavour have already been described in a book with a rather self-satisfied title : *Knight in Africa*, so it will be sufficient to say here that I found Jean in the best of health and spirits : that Ramshaw (who I had taken with me) and I spent some five months in Cape Colony ; that I exposed a great deal of film on the Martial Eagle and on some of the larger animals, including lions (without which, it seems, no film about African wild life can be complete) ; that Ramshaw both disgraced me by catching chickens and nearly forfeited his life by so doing, and, finally, that I returned with an immature specimen of the Martial Eagle, whose parents were under sentence of death on account of their sheep-killing propensities. The new acquisition was christened James, after my ornithological friend, Hubert James of Cradock, C.P., who did so much to help me in making the film.

On the voyage from Cape Town to Southampton James learned to fly to my hand for his food, to put up with strange sights and sounds and in fact to go through the sort of process that Ramshaw and Miss America had had to endure. He re-acted extraordinarily well and, by the time we reached England, might be classed as a trained eagle. Later, when flown over Kent, he emulated the technique of his parents by rising to vast heights in the sky and of soaring about on the look-out for the sight of some potential victim. A frightening habit for, at such a height, he was often temporarily out of control. In the winter of 1936 James accompanied me on my annual tour to the United States.

With his attractive markings and enormous wing-spread he made a considerable impression, although he lacked Ramshaw's poise and dignity. It may have been in part due to James's presence that officials and members of the

INTRODUCING TWO SOUTH AFRICANS

National Geographic Society, before whom we had already appeared on several occasions, were so favourably impressed that I was commissioned to lead, in the following year, an expedition to South Africa to film, amongst other objectives, the monkey eating Crowned Eagle (*Stephanoaëtus Coronatus*)—most formidable of all African eagles.

Whilst locating the Martial Eagle on my first visit to South Africa, I, with Eric Simon of Stellenbosch, had been shown by a Mr. Wells, proprietor of a native store, the nest of some obviously large and ferocious bird—for the ground beneath it was littered with the skulls of hyraces, buck and monkeys. With the help of a feather we had picked up we identified the owner of the nest as the Crowned Eagle.

I had afterwards kept in touch with Wells and had learned that the eagles were still in the neighbourhood and that they looked like nesting again in the following season.

So, this time under the auspices of the National Geographic Society, I once more found myself, towards the end of 1937, in South Africa. I spent several weeks in and around Stellenbosch, filming various wild creatures and awaiting word from Wells that the time was ripe for work on the Crowned Eagles to commence. I left for the Zuurberg Mountains when I received a telegram saying : " Birds nesting, please bring blankets and pillows, Wells."

The filming of the Crowned Eagle involved more planning, more hard work and more moments of despair than anything else I have ever attempted, and to describe it all in detail would fill an entire volume. In short, the nest was built in a yellow-wood tree over 100 feet high, growing in a kloof 1,000 feet deep. Photography seemed at first to be impossible for one could not see onto the eyrie even from the steep side of the kloof because of the thick foliage of the tree's branches which obstructed the view. Wells and his natives overcame that difficulty by making a steel wire ladder, 60 feet long, which was finally suspended from the lowest branch of the tree, 70 feet from the ground, and by lopping off the offending branches. The records

ALL BRITISH EAGLE

we secured of this first nest were not, and never could be, satisfactory—even with a telephoto lens—for we were working from the precipitous kloof-side at a distance of at least 40 yards from the nest. A most discouraging situation ; 40 feet would have been a more reasonable distance.

One morning a native called to say that he had found another nest of this "Leopard of the Air." At first I was inclined to doubt what he said. In all probability I thought, he had found the nest of some other species, for the Crowned Eagle is not by any means a common bird, and had not previously been known to nest so far south. Yet he actually had found a second nest and one, what was more, in a grand position for photography, for it was built on an outgrowing branch so that one could look onto it from the main stem of the tree.

The photography of these dramatic birds as well as our adventures whilst in search of secretary birds, giraffes, hornbills, baboons, rhinoceroses—including the exceedingly rare white variety—and, of course, lions, is another story. It is, however, perhaps as well to give some idea of the manner in which each of our eagles was procured, so that when we refer to any of them later on we shall have some idea of their "background," as the Americans say. Let me recall, then, that we—Egbert Pfeiffer of New York City and I—ultimately constructed a comfortable and well-camouflaged "hide" in the same tree as that in which the Crowned Eagle's eyrie was situated, and from it filmed various incidents in connection with the single surviving eaglet and its parents. "Surviving" is the word, for there were originally two eggs in this nest and eventually two young ones had hatched but when only a few days' old the eaglets commenced to fight, and with fatal results. The male, which had hatched first, killing his sister. On the first nest the same thing happened, only, in that case, it was a female that remained.*

*Whilst C. I. Blackburne and I were photographing a Scottish Golden Eagle's eyrie in 1926, we secured a film sequence of the attack by a female eaglet on her smaller brother, which resulted in the death of the latter.



THE PLACID LION



SWAYING RHYTHMICALLY AS THE VAN TAKES A CURVE

INTRODUCING TWO SOUTH AFRICANS

She did not, however, go out into the world in the accepted manner—but as a captive. We had discovered whilst filming the “satisfactory” nest that some local farmers had heard of the existence of the first—perhaps there had been too much talk of our activities—and had made up their minds to shoot the parent birds which, they said, were killing-off the buck. Much as we regretted the fact that the eagles were depriving some human beings of food, we regretted even more the decision that such splendid birds should be annihilated. There was only one thing we could do if we meant to save their lives, and that was to adopt their offspring, which we had decided we would appropriately name “Coronation,” for it was a Crowned Eagle, and this was in the year of the most recent British Coronation.

Since we had watched this eaglet going through her wing-flapping exercises and even taking short flights on to branches round about the nest, we naturally concluded that it was well within the bounds of possibility that she would fly away when I ascended to the nest. I therefore climbed the wire-ladder very cautiously ; I should have been exceedingly slow and careful anyhow because the ladder, unless you balanced very nicely on it, had a tendency to turn suddenly upside down ! Egbert, or “Eg,” as he is called in his home country, followed me up the ladder with a sack and to lend a hand in case of need. Safely on the lowest limb of the tree I crept forward, leaned against the huge nest, and very cautiously extended my hand towards Coronation.

She rose from where she had been lying on the side of the nest, raised her lovely barred wings and advanced towards me with beak open and eyes rounded with surprise. She could, of course, have flown away, even if only to some familiar branch close by the nest. I can only think she was so taken aback by the sight of my face that she omitted to do so. Anyhow, I succeeded in closing my hand gently but firmly around her legs, and drew her towards me. Then for the first time, I got some idea of the strength of the bird I was holding. I could feel the steely muscles of her legs

ALL BRITISH EAGLE

tauten as she strove to grab something, anything, with her enormously powerful talons. Eg held the mouth of the sack open and I slid Coronation, head first, into it. We were as meticulously careful as the two Scotsmen had been when they captured Ramshaw and his sister !

At the foot of the tree we gently withdrew her from the sack, and, very quietly and gently, hooded her.

And so we acquired our fourth eagle.

A few weeks later Coronation and I were en route for England. I think the voyage helped to tame her as it had helped to tame James. She had so many opportunities of meeting strange people that, in the end, she ceased to be in any way perturbed by them. Sometimes, on a warm sunny day, she would—with a line attached to her jesses—be fastened to some part of the ship out on deck. She was very fond of a coil of rope, which perhaps suggested her old home in the yellow-wood tree, and would continue to lie comfortably on it while people gathered round to admire and photograph her.

So Coronation came to the fold. Ramshaw, whom we have rather neglected in the last few pages, received her with the cold aloofness of the traditional Scot, whilst James, although he hails from her country, got quite worked up and seemed inclined to give battle when he was introduced to her. It was just a demonstration though and nothing happened. I do not believe there was ever any really bad feeling between any of them, although Ramshaw, in spite of his nonchalance, did adopt an aggressive attitude when he and Coronation were flown together for the first time.

On that occasion he had sailed about over and among the trees where Coronation had settled and had made a sudden turn in her direction to come swinging down towards her with all the determination of a falcon at a partridge ; had hit her a thump as he shot by and had knocked her off her perch !

Coronation tried to grab another branch as she fluttered and tumbled earthward, but finally landed, very ignominiously, on the turf beneath the tree ! However, she

STRANGE HUNTING WITH EAGLES

seemed none the worse for the buffeting, and certainly never showed the least resentment towards him afterwards. It seems that she regarded the affair as one of Ramshaw's playful little pranks.

CHAPTER V

STRANGE HUNTING WITH EAGLES

So, in the summer of 1938, I, with Leslie Hoyle to help me, kept and flew daily three different species of eagle. Ramshaw, Scottish Golden Eagle, King of the British Birds; James, Martial Eagle, with a wing spread of eight feet, from the open stretches of the Karoo; and Coronation, the African monkey-eating Crowned Eagle. Miss America was still at the London Zoo.

We did not often fly all the eagles together, as to do so was rather an undertaking. There had to be someone in charge of each of them, and it wasn't always easy to find a third volunteer. And there was also a risk involved in letting the three eagles go together.

It so often happened that one of them, catching sight of, for instance, a rabbit, or a hare, put up such a dramatic show in its efforts to close with the prize that all onlookers kept their eyes glued on it and quite forgot to watch the other two, which, in the meantime might be away into the distance and out of sight after some other quarry in an entirely different direction. Under such conditions one or more of them may easily be lost.

Because of this risk we almost always flew them separately. Their flying and hunting technique varied enormously. Ramshaw's habit was to follow from tree to tree in the hope that some potential victim would be started. Coronation's method was to fly upwards almost perpendicularly (and she could do this as no other eagle I ever saw) to a branch 40 or 50 feet above the ground. Here she would sit, just as the wild Crowned Eagle sits in an African forest, immovable,

ALL BRITISH EAGLE

watching, waiting, for a possible victim to appear down below. And there she would remain until some attraction, alive or dead, did move.

If she were not over-keen—had partaken too liberally of food lately—and was not much interested in the lure, there was only one CERTAIN way of getting her to come to it, and that was by hiding it in the grass or under the bushes beneath the tree and of dragging it out, on a long line, of course, as though it were some animal emerging. This trick was infallible.

It seemed that she simply could not resist doing what her ancestors had been in the habit of doing for the last few million years—dropping onto unsuspecting victims. She would, if in the right mood and proper state of keenness, fly upwards to turn on her back and catch the lure when it was thrown up to astonishing heights, but what she liked most was to wait, preferably on some dead branch at the top of a tree, until something, alive by choice, appeared beneath her. Then that silent heave forward, the headlong earthward rush on half-closed wings and the final crash as she landed—on the target however fast it might be moving.

James's technique was, again, quite different. As already recounted, his plan was to mount into the sky before attempting anything. Often James has risen to such a height that to us down below he has seemed, despite his wing-spread of eight feet, to be no larger than a pigeon. Dangerous, of course, for an eagle at such a height commands a view of an immense stretch of country, and may decide to make an attack on something a mile or so away. Woe betide any creature of reasonable size that, in open country, might be forced to make its appearance beneath him. James would half close his wings and rush towards the earth—a speck growing bigger and bigger as he approached—to flatten out and shoot up to the victim with terrific speed and with the greatest ease.

Many people came out from time to time, to see one of the eagles fly, and the way in which they were managed.

Perhaps the occasion on which an audience was most



"HERE WE GO THEN!"



LANDED WITH A "WHOP" ON ESMOND'S GLOVE

STRANGE HUNTING WITH EAGLES

deeply impressed was that on which a party of boys of the Tonbridge School Natural History Society came to see Ramshaw in action.

It was a dismal afternoon, everything soaked and still raining. Many of the visitors had brought cameras and were eager to take photographs.

"Do as you like," I had said, "but you won't get any decent results in this sort of light."

"Well, can we see one of the eagles fly?"

"My dear fellow," I answered inwardly groaning that I had to refuse, "You can't fly in this sort of weather. They hate flying in the wet and if we let one of them go it will finish up in one of those trees and refuse to come down again until it's dry—and Heaven knows when THAT will be."

I felt dreadfully embarrassed. They were all looking at me in such a reproachful sort of way. And there was almost an hour to go before tea.

I tried to cheer things up by showing them the Goshawks for the second time.

"That one is from Germany: she's very good at rabbits. Has taken a few hares, too. Very nice hawk to handle," I explained, hoping I was arousing a faint interest. "That one over there is from Hungary. She's five or six years' old. Belonged to a friend of mine who used to fly her at rabbits, but hasn't done anything with her for two or three years. Isn't she lovely? I think the most handsome Gos I have ever seen. I hope she turns out to be a good one." My audience was inclined to turn away. Obviously they weren't much amused.

At about 4 o'clock the weather brightened. The rain ceased and the sun tried to shine. I decided we might as well try our luck. "Well," I said, "it looks as though the rain has cleared off. Let's give old Ramshaw a turn." At once the doleful faces lit up. All were eager for the chase.

"Mind you, you mustn't expect to see much," I warned them, "if he has a crack at a rabbit he'll get sodden in this

ALL BRITISH EAGLE

wet grass so that we can't fly him again. Still, we'll try our luck."

Soon afterwards Ramshaw, relieved of his chain and swivel, left my arm and winged his way to the group of oak trees that he knew so well, doubtless expecting that such a crowd would contrive to persuade a rabbit to show itself.

"Let's work the nettles beneath him," I called. "There's often a rabbit there."

As, all eager for the chase, we moved forward to put the plan into action, Jean, who was with us, suddenly shouted "Look, Dad! There's a stoat. It's run into that bush!" "Are you certain," I asked, as we drew nearer to the small, isolated bush. "Yes, I know it's in there." Hardly had she spoken when I myself caught sight of the stoat, which darted forward as though it was going to go away across the open and then seemed to change its mind, for it doubled back into the bush again. "Alright, chaps." I roared in my loudest parade voice, "Round this bush in a circle—
—MOVE."

At this the men doubled forward—just like soldiers. I suppose that, as a matter of fact, most of them belonged to the School O.C.T.—and made a ring round the bush.

Needless to say, I hadn't the slightest hope that we should ever succeed in catching the stoat. But this was to be a bit of fun. The excitement was intense, "Look out, it's coming your way . . . Stop it!" "Drive it this way. I've got a stick." "Look out, Jones!" I saw the stoat dash out towards Reynolds. As he tried to put his foot on it, it turned back and shot out straight towards me. I think a yell went up. I know I made a wild grab and succeeded in catching it by its body and neck. It wriggled and tried hard to bite my hand, but I happened to be holding it just as one holds a fractious ferret. It was powerless to do anything except to eject that evil-smelling fluid—that is peculiar to the skunk family—all down my new jacket!

We carried our captive back in triumph, Ramshaw, who probably wished he had been close enough to have a

STRANGE HUNTING WITH EAGLES

go at it, following obediently overhead, and shut it up in a straw-filled box, from which, I imagined, we should have some difficulty in extracting it later on.

Then, once more, we set out to work the nettles while Ramshaw again took perch in one of the oaks above them. But, for a second time, we were destined not to serve him. We had only just passed the bush where we had captured the stoat when one of the party, peering into a deep hole, or pit, where they had been digging for gravel, exclaimed :

"I say, you chaps, there's an owl down here !" I hurried forward with the rest to look into the pit and there, sure enough was a mature Little Owl perched on a dead branch that had fallen down there. "Alright, chaps," I once more shouted "round this hole in a circle. MOVE !"

Again, like well trained troops, the Natural History Society made a ring round the place. "Throw a stone at it," someone suggested. "Don't do anything of the sort !" I cut in. "Here, you, Cobb, take your coat off and let's see if we can't catch it." Off came the coat in a jiffey.

"Can we drop the coat on it ?" someone asked. Of course we couldn't. But it happened at that moment that the owl decided to make a dash for it, and commenced the upward flight. It was almost away, just over the edge of the pit when the coat was dropped and the owl under it pinned to the ground ! So the owl was carried home in triumph—just like the stoat. Ramshaw was still sitting in the same tree when, having caged up the owl, we again set out. We never put up a rabbit for him because, as we neared his tree a grey squirrel was seen, some way away, going overland from one clump of trees to another. Ram had seen it too and had taken off in pursuit before we had quite realized that it was a grey squirrel. Of course he overhauled and came up to it without any undue effort, and we all hurried forward to find Ramshaw preparing to partake of a hot feed.

Now I quite expect that a good many people might

ALL BRITISH EAGLE

refuse to believe this story. "I mean, a chap catches a stoat in his hands; two minutes later puts an owl into his pocket and then sets his eagle at squirrels! Too fantastic!"

It does sound a bit fantastic, but it is, strangely enough, quite true as any members of the Tonbridge School Natural History Society—leader, Mr. A. L. Thomas, can testify. And that is the only occasion on which Ram succeeded in catching a squirrel.

After these exploits I decided to call it a day—as much to avoid an anti-climax as for any other reason!—and we filed in to partake of a tea which consisted largely of what are—or were—known as half-penny buns.

Later that evening the stoat and the owl were liberated.

CHAPTER VI

GERMAN INTERLUDE AND THE TRIO IN ACTION

AMONG the many visitors who came to see the eagles was a German ornithologist, Irwin Stresemann, of the Berlin Museum, who I had previously met in the United States and at the International Ornithological Congress at Rouen.

He was so impressed when he saw Ramshaw and Coronation flying about in the park that he asked me if I would take one or both of them to Germany so that Goering might see them in action.

"I am quite sure he would be delighted," he said. "Would you be prepared to do it?"

"Oh, yes, of course, I should very much like to. It would be great fun," I replied although I was aware that there was a certain political uneasiness hanging over Europe.

Stresemann had seen my film of the Crowned Eagle when I had shown it for the International Congress and had then suggested that I should show it again in Berlin for the Deutsche Ornithologische Gesellschaft. Now he had a new idea. "It would be 'vunderschön,'" he remarked absently, "if you could combine the two things: show the

GERMAN INTERLUDE

film for the Gesellschaft and also take your eagles for Goering to see."

In the end I went alone to Germany and am sorry that Ramshaw, at least, didn't come with me. It would have been a new adventure for him, and he would doubtless have created a terrific sensation. Also, since this book mainly concerns his experiences there would have been more justification for recounting here some of the little incidents which occurred and remarks that were made during my stay in Berlin. That was at the time of the Munich talks at the end of September, 1938, and there was a considerable feeling of uneasiness in the air. I travelled by plane from Croydon Aerodrome to the Templehof (Berlin) Airfield and had a most interesting time when I got there. Everyone seemed ready enough to be agreeable to us British and it was difficult to believe that the clouds of war were gathering so ominously.

The film I showed seemed to be much appreciated, although unable to speak German, I delivered my commentary in English. Ex-King Ferdinand of Bulgaria was there and afterwards congratulated me on the pictures we had secured. He told me, speaking in excellent English, that he was particularly interested in the Crowned Eagle and that he had one of these birds among his collection of unusual creatures.

The general atmosphere was of quite surprising affability. We had a beer-drinking evening, for instance, during which I discovered that my companions were ex-German army men of the last war. They became quite excited when they learned that I was on the other side during that conflict.

"You were actually with the British Army? In the firing line?" one of them asked incredulously.

"Yes, I was there alright. On different parts of the front—Ypres, Messines Ridge, the Somme."

"You were in the Somme country? Did you know Bapaume? The Ancre River?"

"Yes, we made an attack on November 18th, 1916, at Grandcourt."

ALL BRITISH EAGLE

"November 18th. H-m-m-m. Oh, yes, I was there!" one of them burst in delighted, it would seem, to think that we had shared in the same adventure. "That was terrible!"

"Thank goodness for that," I said.

"Thank goodness? That it was *terrible*? I do not understand!"

"Well, I thought *we* had all the rotten times," I explained.

"Oh, No," he hastened to assure me. "It was terrible for us too."

Which was quite encouraging.

Of course, I don't for a moment imagine that he really was opposite to us when we attacked on that occasion. He was probably helping to make the conversation easier. After all he, too, had participated in the ordeal and had also come through with a whole skin and wanted me to know that he was "one of us," as it were.

"But we are good friends now?" he enquired almost pleadingly.

"Of course!" I replied.

"Ach!" he exclaimed in a relieved voice, "Prosit!" Each of us grabbed his drink and we clinked glasses and repeated "Prosit," which is a rough translation of "Bung-ho."

At a dinner I attended, one of the speakers, of course addressing his audience in German, made some remark which was greeted by a good deal of applause. I didn't know what it was all about but had recognised the word "Englander." So I turned to the man sitting next to me and asked him what the speaker had said. "He says," my informant whispered, "zat he iss vary pleeced zat zare iss an Englishman here zis efe-ning who vos not too frightent to com."

At this, I am almost ashamed to say, I burst into a sudden short guffaw of laughter which caused many eyes to be turned disapprovingly in my direction.

At another dinner I had the privilege of sitting next to a most alluring German lady, whose name was Frau

GERMAN INTERLUDE

Duve (I imagine that is how it is spelt—it was pronounced Doover) who told me that she knew my part of the world quite well, having stayed with friends in Tunbridge Wells. We seemed to have plenty to talk about, and in the course of our conversation I mentioned that I had watched a Guard Mounting parade during the day. (I did not mention that I had not been impressed either by the physique or deportment of the men.)

Our conversation having switched to soldiers, she referred to the vast numbers that had recently passed through Berlin on the way to Czecho-Slovakia.

"Well," I interposed, "I hope they don't go too far."

"Excuse me?" she enquired. "I do not understand."

"I said I just hope your fellows won't go too far," I repeated. Even then I don't think she understood.

During my stay I was taken to see various parts of Berlin : the Zoo, Unter den Linden, the Friedrichstrasse, and so on. At one point on the tour my guide stopped as we were passing some large buildings, and, gazing at them reverently, exclaimed "What a terrible thing it would be if such lovely buildings were bombed. But these will not be destroyed. Our Fuhrer has promised us that Germany will never be bombed."

Then I recall a remark that one of the German ornithologists made one evening while we were seated in an open-air cafe drinking litres of lager. We had been sitting there in silence for some moments when we heard the tramp of marching feet and the sound of thin, tinkling music. I looked in the direction of these sounds and presently saw a squad of young women swing into view and march—heads up, shoulders squared, eyes to the front, arms swinging evenly—along the road towards where we were sitting.

At the head of the column was the musician, a young woman of, I suppose, nineteen or twenty, who, with head held even higher than the rest, plucked at a mandolin or ukelele as she strode along.

They passed us in truly military fashion : set expressions,

ALL BRITISH EAGLE

eyes fixed on what was ahead of them, rhythmic movements: left-right, left-right, plink, plank, plonk, plunk. They were singing the "Horst Wessel." As they disappeared and the sound of their tramping died away I turned to my host and remarked: "That's interesting. Young women soldiers. Something you'd never see in England."

He meditated for a few moments, and then, leaning forward and looking me straight in the eye, said in a low voice, "So I believe." Then, after a pause, he added, "But, you know, it is possible to be too pacific." All of which has nothing to do with the subject of this book, but, in view of subsequent developments, may not be entirely without interest.

As I have already mentioned, these incidents took place "at the time of Munich," and I gathered that I was fortunate in having reserved a seat on a plane which left for England a few days later. Leslie and some of the others were at Croydon to meet me and after a forty-minutes' drive I found myself at home again.

The eagles were all in splendid shape, and we got down to the business of securing action films of them without waste of time.

I was eager to get some really startling pictures for the new film, "Leopard of the Air," the story of the National Geographic Society's Expedition which I was to take to the States in the following winter, and sometimes took the risk of letting all three eagles take the air together. These occasions were invariably accompanied by a certain amount of "language," periods of apprehension and momentary recriminations. It was always difficult to get all the necessary people together; there had to be three to handle the eagles, plus a cameraman, and the last was a particularly trying problem. However, we eventually managed to rope in Carlos Allones, a young Cuban staying with friends, who was usually available and who, having learned the technique of the thing, became a first rate cameraman. Carlos took some of the finest sequences of the eagles in

GERMAN INTERLUDE

action—much of it in colour—that we have ever secured.

I am still conversant with most of what happened on an afternoon in July of that year, 1938. Not that anything startling took place but because we managed to secure records of most of what DID go on, and I see them from time to time. Esmond took charge of James, Leslie was responsible—as it were—for Ramshaw, and I managed Coronation. Carlos handled the movie camera. We had arranged to start at about eleven-thirty in the morning. Having got all lures ready and packed into the lure-bags, the eagles were hooded, fastened to their respective places on the perch in the car and we were ready to move off. That station wagon, or utility van or shooting brake was a perfect machine for the job. In it, the eagles, being hooded and consequently sitting quite still, generally passed unnoticed. On this particular occasion we drove to an open piece of country where we could see for a long way in every direction, and where we should stand a lesser chance of losing any of our charges than if we had selected some more enclosed spot. On our arrival we removed the eagles from their perch and carried them to the top of a rise. Carlos, remaining half-way down the slope, was meanwhile busy winding up, stopping-down and focussing his portable movie camera. At last he was ready. "Stand a little closer," he shouted. "I can't get you nicely in the picture. Right! That'll do. All ready?"

"Yes, all set."

"Here we go then. This is the camera!"

Ramshaw takes off first, then James, Coronation last of all. Ramshaw, ever ready to do the right thing, flies towards and over the camera. A pity Carlos can't keep them ALL in the picture, for Coronation having mounted to a height of 100 feet or so is coming back right over us. Further off James is already at a far greater height and still rising steadily. In the valley below we had noticed several rabbits feeding, but they all appeared to have decamped at the first hint of danger. Now Ramshaw is swinging towards us, grows larger and larger as he approaches. And Carlos

ALL BRITISH EAGLE

still holds him in the view-finder. "Look out! He's after one," someone yells to warn Carlos as Ramshaw keels over and swoops down after a rabbit that is going *ventre à terre* to the warren. They are some way from the camera now, but near enough to show Ramshaw's sudden twist as he lands in a cloud of dust where the rabbit ought to be! Carlos is tearing down the hill, stops within a few feet of Ramshaw, re-focusses his camera and exposes a few feet on the disappointed fellow as he peers into the hole down which the rabbit has escaped.

"Missed, by jove! Another six inches would have done it."

"Still a marvellous show."

"Think you got it all, Carlos?"

"Well, pick him up." I join in, perhaps a little testily, for I hate to see any of the eagles dished in this way, and add "Where are the others?" No one knows! As usual everybody has been watching Ramshaw and has no idea what has become of the others. "Where the dickens are they?" I ask myself, searching the distance for some sign.

"Look out, Esmond!" I hear Leslie shout excitedly, and turn just in time to see James flying at full speed towards my nephew. In a flash Esmond's arm is stretched out to meet the oncoming shape which lands on the glove with an audible "WHOP."

"Did you get that, Carlos?"

"I think so. The focus should be right, and I got going before James landed."

Carlos is certainly the "live-wire," the "quick-on-the-trigger" cameraman.

"Well, that's two of them back. Now what about Coronation?"

For some time we wander about, swinging lures and whistling but without any result. When some mile away from our starting point someone shouts, "Here she is!" There she is, indeed, sitting on a post by a corrugated iron hut once frequented by a family of pigs. She is leaning forward and peering at the bottom part of the hut.

GERMAN INTERLUDE

"I bet she's put a rabbit in under that hut," I remark as Esmond comes panting up.

"Well, why not push the hut over" is the retort which I ought to have expected. "You stand over there, Carlos, you might get a good picture."

Now to overturn the hut.

"Everybody ready?" "Right—HEAVE."

Slowly the hut is tilted sideways—a little more. Curious, no rabbit. "Over she goes!" But no rabbit appears. Then we notice what is obviously a shallow rabbit-hole in the sand that the hut had kept dry. "Perhaps it's down there," Leslie suggests.

"Wait a minute, let's put Corrie on the hut. She'll be a bit higher if one DOES go out."

So Coronation is allowed to fly onto the over-turned hut, and, as is her habit, sits there patiently while we proceed to investigate. Esmond thrusts his arm down the rabbit burrow to see whether he can feel anything when, as he does so, a rabbit bolts out of another exit. A shout goes up, "Look out, Carlos, it's away!" Coronation is after it, and with the impetus she acquires by dropping from the side of the hut is overtaking it. We can see her make that sudden side-turn, throw her feet forward—and she is lost in the second cloud of dust we saw that day. When we make in to her we see that she is holding the already dead rabbit with a grip that would mean the quick end of a fox or even a baboon.

We have found out that it is absolutely impossible to tear such food away from her. We tried to induce her to loosen her grip on it by dangling small pieces of meat before her eyes (in the hope that, being unable to think of two things at once, she would forget she had something more worth-while in her foot and relax her hold) but she is not so easily fooled.

So we retire to a short distance and sit and chat or smoke, until she has eaten her fill.

"Did you get that, Carlos?" I ask our much elated cameraman.

ALL BRITISH EAGLE

"Oh, yes! It was just terrific. I hope it will be O.K."

"Did you follow the rabbit, or get her taking off?"

"I got onto the rabbit soon after it started and held it until she caught it."

"Well done."

So the afternoon's filming came to an end. The eagles had not done anything particularly spectacular but we hoped—even expected—we had got some worth-while flight sequences. And that is how it was; sometimes everything would go wrong, and we would return without any results. Occasionally something tremendously dramatic would happen and we might be lucky enough to secure a record of it. At least we always tried!

On the way home we talked over the possibility of getting Miss America back from the London Zoo. Her technique differed so much from that of any of the others that it might be worth while making a film about these "Winged Monarchs." Coronation's flying was improving steadily; James was making new height records and Ramshaw was better disciplined than ever. We would start on this new film when I returned from the U.S.A. in the following spring. It ought to be an unusual show; four eagles in action—each of a different species.

In spite of the political uneasiness prevailing we looked forward enthusiastically to the fun we were going to have in 1939.

CHAPTER VII

MR. RAMSHAW: SHEEP KILLER

At the end of December, 1938, I again proceeded to the United States. I had decided that I would take Coronation with me instead of Ramshaw, for I was going to show the results of the National Geographic Society's Expedition, and she would be able to demonstrate some of the characteristics of the particular bird under discussion.

Leslie again came to the rescue and promised to look

MR. RAMSHAW: SHEEP KILLER

after Ramshaw whilst I was away, and one of my nephews, Philip Glasier, a very keen falconer, agreed to take care of James.

The journey across the Atlantic was, as is usual in peace time, very restful and very amusing in spite of periods of wild weather and mountainous seas, Coronation had a little disused cabin, far down in the interior of the ship, all to herself, which she took to readily enough.

As usual the word soon got round that there was a tame eagle on the ship and I spent a good deal of my time in conducting parties to Coronation's quarters and to answering the same old questions: "How old is she?" "Where did she come from?" "How much does she weigh?"

On more than one occasion I was asked whether I would take her outside and let her have a fly round! My answer was: "Definitely no. She would probably become panicky in such strange surroundings, might take to the air and finish up by pitching on some other ship—if she didn't try to land on the waves."

Still, I did give her some exercise each day by letting her fly about in the gymnasium or the smoke room. Although exceedingly handsome—as I believe some of the accompanying illustrations will suggest—and a much more dramatic-looking bird than Ramshaw—she, like James, lacked the latter's dignity and easy assurance. If a stranger, particularly a female, approached and perhaps held out a hand as a gesture of friendliness, Coronation was liable to lower her head, raise her hackles—or "Crown"—and, with open beak, to assume an attitude of terrible ferocity. She never attempted to attack anybody, but she didn't exactly encourage familiarity on the part of those she didn't know.

I made one discovery: Coronation would invariably fly to any obvious perch to which I, as it were, directed her—and this simple feat proved to be of considerable value on the tour, for it enabled me to induce her to give demonstrations of the flight of this beautiful eagle. I used to encourage her to fly from my arm to a heavy chair-back or

ALL BRITISH EAGLE

an upturned table which had been placed in a suitable position at the other end of my cabin. Before we reached Sandy Hook she was doing the length of the lounge—and with two or three dozen people looking on. This was not, of course, in any degree comparable to the way in which Ramshaw flies over the heads of the audience, but was, nevertheless, a very pretty demonstration of flying which met with much approbation.

At that time, because of psittacosis—or parrot disease—the importation of live birds into the United States was prohibited. In the previous year I had had considerable trouble, owing to this regulation, in getting Ramshaw into the country. I had, in fact, begun to think that I should have to leave him on the ship—a pleasant prospect! As it was, he had had to spend two days and nights on board after our arrival at New York as the Customs officials would not allow him to enter the country without a permit. In the end things had straightened themselves out satisfactorily, but I had received a considerable fright and had been careful, this time, to obtain a permit from the Department of Biological Survey in Washington, which allowed Coronation to proceed without hindrance.

We made our way to the familiar Gotham Hotel, where we were greeted as heartily as ever although I detected a note of disappointment when I announced that Ramshaw had been left behind.

“Hullo, there, Cap! Glad to see you back. So you’ve got old Ramshaw with you again?”

“No, it’s not Ramshaw this time. I’ve got a different one. An African monkey-eater, a marvellous thing.”

“Aw, Gee, I’m sorry we’re not going to see old Ramshaw!”

Or up in the Club:

“Have you got old Ramshaw with you, Sniper?”

“No, I’ve left him behind this time. I’ve brought a much more unusual thing. One we got in South Africa early this year. Much more dramatic than Ramshaw.”

“Haven’t you made a mistake in not bringing Ramshaw,

MR. RAMSHAW: SHEEP KILLER

old boy? I mean, it's he who has had the build-up—he's the one that people want to see."

Charles Tebay went even further. He looked me in the face and said with some emphasis: "Don't dare to come over here on a lecture tour without Ramshaw!"

As it turned out Coronation made a distinct impression, though more on account of her great size, obvious power and terrifying expression than because of any charming personality. It was, in any case, far more appropriate that I should have taken her on that particular tour, for the Crowned Eagle was the main feature of "Leopard of the Air," the film I was showing, and in which Ramshaw, for a change, played an insignificant part.

In the meantime Coronation and I made our way up to the "roof garden," where the little hut that had been allocated to Ramshaw after his flight over the city was placed at Coronation's disposal. All pots of paint, brooms and mops had been cleared out, and a padded perch was fixed in position all ready for her arrival. Having unlocked and opened her crate I took her onto my arm, removed the leather bag (or "mitten" as one American girl called it) from her tail and placed her in her new home for the night.

I ought, perhaps, to explain what is meant by "the leather bag or mitten." Coronation has, for an eagle, an unusually long tail—or "train" as the falconers of old referred to that part of a hawk's anatomy—which, I realised, would be quickly ruined by coming in contact with the hard corners and general mess inside the crate during the constant journeys we should have to make. I had, therefore, got a local boot-repairer to make a flat leather sheath—pliable on top and stiff on the under side—in which her tail would be enclosed whilst we were travelling. At each upper corner of this sheath—or mitten—was affixed one-half of a metal "snapper." Onto each of her outer tail-feathers the corresponding half of the snapper was attached by a small piece of leather. Her tail having been inserted into this safety-cover the latter was easily made secure, and

ALL BRITISH EAGLE

the risk of damage to her feathers obviated. The device proved to be eminently satisfactory, and Coronation made her many appearances with her beautifully-marked fan-like tail in perfect order. Otherwise, by the end of the four months' tour, it would have been completely spoiled.

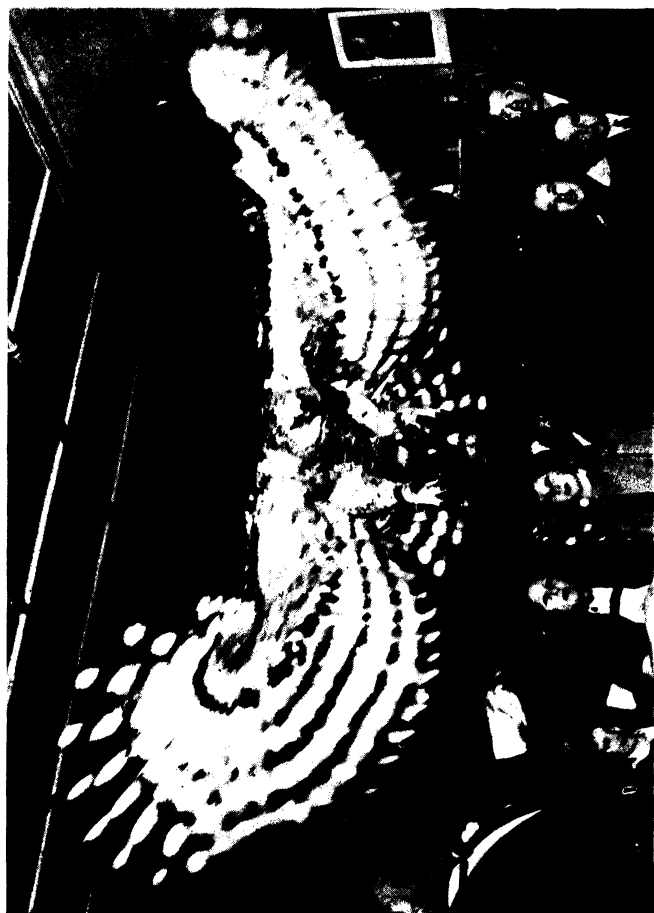
But to return to our story. Having seen that Coronation was comfortably and safely housed for the night I made my way to my own quarters—the familiar room, 2101, on the 21st floor. Then down to the British Club to see the lads and to ring up friends living in the city. Several days were to elapse before we started work, for we had to wait until the films had been examined and passed by the Appraiser and our first engagement was due.

Our tour proceeded according to plan. In the course of it we met many old friends who generally expressed regret that Ramshaw had not been brought along. We travelled thousands of miles under varying climatic conditions—from the blizzard of Chicago to the warmth and blue skies of California. I imagine that California appealed to Coronation, as it did to me, more than anywhere else for she spent many days in lovely weather, gazing at the glorious scenery or indulging in a flight.

I still regret not having had a movie camera with me one afternoon on an estate not many miles from Los Angeles, when a chance for a priceless picture occurred. Coronation had been having a fly round and was perched on a fallen tree-trunk some ten feet from where I was sitting where she made a grand picture against a background of fruit-laden orange trees and distant snow-capped mountains. As I sat there basking in the warm sunshine, a tiny hummingbird appeared, hesitated as it was about to pass Coronation, and then, puzzled, perhaps, by such an unfamiliar apparition, flew towards her in order to inspect her more closely. When about three feet away from her it hung as though suspended, hovering on such rapidly beating wings that they were invisible, and carried out a detailed investigation. Its thin curved beak was pointing directly at Coronation as she, with head inclined forward and tilted on one side,



HOW DARE YOU WEAR BETTER FEATHERS THAN ME ?



THE UNIQUE PHOTOGRAPH

MR. RAMSHAW: SHEEP KILLER

sat quietly regarding it. After a scrutiny lasting for some thirty seconds, the humming-bird made off, but later on, apparently unable to resist having one more look at the strange intruder, returned to hover again at even closer quarters. Not more than a foot separated the two ornithological extremes, but Coronation made no move of aggression. She seemed mildly interested in the visitor—nothing more.

Coronation distinguished herself whilst in the States by catching just one wild animal. Had the victim been a monkey or a wild cat, her achievement could hardly have caused louder cheers or more enthusiastic expressions of delight. It happened after a show for the Adventurers Club in Chicago. The film had been shown and Coronation had concluded her act—we thought—when a little crowd of us repaired to another room to partake of some refreshment. We had been there for some half-an-hour, I suppose, when someone noticed that Coronation, who had been sitting composedly on the back of a chair, had suddenly assumed an attitude of alert, eager wakefulness. With hunched shoulders and lowered head she was glaring fixedly at the other end of the room.

Suddenly a shout went up: "Watch out! It's gone behind that chest!" At once all was confusion: several men hurried forward to move the chest. "Hold hard! Let the dog see the rabbit," someone shouted. "Yes," I cut in, "Make way a bit; she'll never see it if you all stand in the way." Too late. Someone moved the chest a trifle and—out dashed a mouse! The view-hallos, the yells of excitement were terrific. Coronation, in spite of the mass of humanity which obscured the view, had caught sight of the mouse and had been within an ace of starting at it. "Alright, it's under that chair!" "Stand aside, can't you, THAT's better. Now, out with it!" "Yoicks, wind 'im! Hark for'ard." "Hey, come round here! Why don't we drive him out that way?" Such remarks, mingled with imitations of hunting horns, the clinking of glasses being hurriedly set down and the shuffling of feet combined

ALL BRITISH EAGLE

to add to the general confusion. "Slide it this way. No, tip it up. Now look out!" There was a breathless pause for a couple of seconds and then: "Tally-ho!" and once again the mouse made a dash for safety. This time it had further to go and before it could reach the next cover Coronation had swept across the room, brushing aside the company as she did so, and landed with a mighty "hur-roosh" all round it. From then on we hardly saw the mouse. First of all it was entirely hidden by its enormous captor and when Coronation lowered her head to sample the tit-bit she swallowed it at one gulp.

Now pandemonium was let loose; cheers were redoubled; glasses recharged, and Coronation's health drunk in a variety of alcoholic beverages; what delirious demonstrations of delight! One member of the Club expressed his disappointment at not having secured the brush! Altogether, the evening was a resounding success—the only pity being that there was no photographer there to secure some scenes of this unique occasion.

Many photographs *were* taken, of course, both by Press and private photographers, which usually portrayed Coronation sitting on my arm with her wings spread—a pose which, by the way, photographers have asked Ramshaw to assume so many, many times. I got quite weary of the question: "Say, do you think you could get him to spread his wings?" I usually—invariably—figured in the resulting photograph myself and always spoilt what might have been a happy picture by my expression of extreme truculence.

Several really first-rate pictures were secured, and of them all, one is outstanding. It was taken after a show for the Philadelphia Forum, in a room behind the scenes of the Academy of Music, by a photographer named Newton Hartmann. Hartmann is a photographer with ideas and suggested that he should try for a picture of Coronation as she was flying towards the camera—if we could contrive to get her to do it. I thought that it shouldn't be too difficult for all that should be necessary would be for her to fly from my arm to a perch immediately above Hartmann's head.

MR. RAMSHAW: SHEEP KILLER

So, having, as it were, arranged a plan of campaign, Hartmann focussed on a point some eight feet in front of him with the idea of making a flash-exposure at the instant that Coronation reached that particular distance, which sounds easy enough but which actually is quite the opposite.

But we were going to try our luck, so I stood back, facing Hartmann, and waited for the word to release Coronation.

"All ready?" I asked.

"All set," he replied. "Let her go."

"This is it, then," I said, as I brought my left arm slowly forward so that Coronation would take off. When she was just about half-way to the perch, Hartmann's light-bulb flashed. He had made an exposure. Coronation, quite unruffled, reached her perch and turned calmly round to face me again. "I guess I shot a bit too soon," Hartmann remarked. "Can we try that again?"

We tried again—and again—and again. In the end Hartmann secured the most striking picture of an eagle in action that I have yet seen. It is reproduced herewith.

My thoughts, meanwhile, frequently strayed to England; to Jean and Ramshaw and James, and the film we were going to make in the following summer. That I had not heard from Leslie for a considerable time did not strike me as being very strange since he had always been a hopeless correspondent, and I could only take it for granted that Ramshaw and the two other eagles were doing well.

It, therefore, came as something like a shock when I, at last, received a letter from which I learned that he hadn't written recently because he had been through a very anxious time. Ramshaw had been at large for two weeks, living on the fat of the land—rabbits, chickens, and his Lordship's pheasants, and had, in consequence become entirely independent and unapproachable. Leslie had seen him, soaring on high, on several occasions but had never had a chance of getting up to him. During the last week Ramshaw seemed to have disappeared completely—except that letters had arrived from people who had read in the Press of the vagabond's adventure, saying that he had been seen at

ALL BRITISH EAGLE

Dover or Ilfracombe or even in London. Then, one day, the Sevenoaks police had rung up to say that an eagle with a bell on its leg had killed a sheep.

"KILLED A SHEEP!" Leslie had exclaimed. "He'd never kill a SHEEP!"

"Well, this one has killed a sheep" the voice over the 'phone persisted. "You had better do something about it if it's yours. They're going to shoot it."

"Where is it?" Leslie had enquired breathlessly.

"At Manor Farm, between Bessels Green and Ide Hill."

"Right. I'll go at once. Thanks for letting me know."

Leslie had dashed out, got the car going and made his way, full speed, to Manor Farm. As he drove a thought kept recurring in his mind, "A sheep . . . but he'd never kill a SHEEP."

On his arrival at Manor Farm an extraordinary scene presented itself: Farmers—mostly armed with guns; a group of boys, some gamekeepers and a couple of women were standing in a rough half-circle gazing at a large bird, some 25 yards away from them, which was calmly pulling at the head of a dead sheep.

"Is this your bird?" someone had asked.

"Yes, it must be."

"You're just about in time. We were wondering who should shoot the blinking thing."

Leslie had wasted no more time in argument but had walked cautiously forward, calling to Ramshaw quietly as he did so (quite expecting that Ramshaw, having been out on the loose for two weeks, would make off at any moment) had dropped gently onto one knee, extended his hand and got a hold on the jesses. What a moment!

Leslie had got him! Ramshaw was back!

.

Coronation and I left the States at the beginning of April and had a very jolly crossing. Major Perry, of the British Club in New York, was on board. He and I shared a little table in the dining saloon and derived a good deal of



RAMSHAW AND THE HERONS



MISS AMERICA

MR. RAMSHAW: SHEEP KILLER

fun—as usual on a ship—out of discussing other passengers. The time passed almost too quickly—although I was hankering to be home and to get on with the business of making the new “Four Eagle” film.

On reaching home I found that Ramshaw was looking as fit as ever—eyes, feet, beak, plumage; all in first-rate order. Evidently his escapade had had no ill-effects.

Leslie was of the opinion that Ramshaw HAD killed the sheep. “It was a full-grown one too,” he added in a tone of pride as though secretly pleased that Ramshaw should have tackled such a monster. “I buried its head by the rubbish-heap so that you can see it for yourself.” The head of the defunct sheep, a little ripe by this time, was accordingly produced and I was asked to pass judgment on it. It was the head of a mature sheep but, I cannot help thinking, either of one in very poor condition, or of one that had got tangled up in brambles. One, anyhow, that seemed to Ramshaw to be *hors de combat*, for he has never attempted to attack a sheep, or, for that matter, a lamb at any other time—before or since.

“Anyhow, Ramshaw was eating it, and I had to pay £3 for it,” Leslie hinted. Without a murmur I handed him £3, which was little enough to pay for Ramshaw’s home-coming.

A few days later James returned to the fold. Philip had done his job most efficiently. In consequence, James was in perfect order.

So we had our three eagles safe and sound. Now to get the fourth. Necessary arrangements were made, and—on a morning in May, 1939—I arrived at the Zoological Society’s offices with a large crate in which Miss America was to travel home. She had already been removed from the aviary in which she had lived for the past few years and had been put into a large wooden case where she was sitting quietly enough. I decided not to distress her by transferring her to my crate, and, leaving the latter behind, set out for home.

Miss America proved to be rather difficult to handle—which is not surprising considering that she had been

ALL BRITISH EAGLE

untouched for so long—and had reverted to her old habit of biting. However, she was in fairly good shape ; one or two of her tail feathers were broken and a couple of primary tips were missing—which was better than I had expected since she had been in a cage and had doubtless spent some of her leisure time in crashing against the wires.

By dint of much patient handling and careful feeding she, at length, became more like her old self. We practically cured her of her abominable habit of biting by holding towards her some hard object against which her beak would grate : a piece of stone, a knife-handle, or some other such rough article which we thought might, as it were, “ set her teeth on edge ” if she should bite it. Of course, she soon learned to avoid whatever we were using and to seek out the more succulent fingers which were holding it. But, generally speaking, she abandoned the idea of using her beak as a weapon and became in consequence a much more amenable pet.

Like the others she was, for some weeks, flown on a line to the lure every day and eventually learned again what she had, since we had last flown her, completely forgotten—the habit of returning to her food whenever it was displayed.

CHAPTER VIII

THE PEACEFUL SUMMER OF 1939

I soon found out, even if I had guessed it before, that the business of looking after and exercising four eagles—that is, of flying each one loose every day—is, for one individual without any assistance, a real, whole-time job. Every so often one of them would rake away after some potential meal—a chicken, a pheasant, a hare or even a cat—and whether a kill was the result or not, the following-up involved a great deal of running—not to mention anxiety and occasional explanations !

The question of food did not present any difficulties.

THE SUMMER OF 1939

Rabbits were plentiful, chickens' heads, specially reserved by the famous Sevenoaks poultry shop, were usually available and a visit to the gamekeeper's cottage generally resulted in a supply of deceased jays, stoats, grey squirrels, or other "vermin."

But the hundred-and-one jobs in connection with the housing, feeding, exercising, and general welfare of the eagles took up an immense amount of time. I knew that I must keep them all in first-rate, keen condition—in "flying order"—if we were to get the pictures that were required for the new film. And it seemed that we were never going to be able to take them. So many helpers were needed but could not arrange to be available at the same time.

Leslie could only get away on an afternoon; Brian Armstrong (who had handled trained hawks before and who had agreed to help, could only come during week-ends; Esmond wouldn't be free for some time as he was acting in a film; Chilcott, the gamekeeper, wasn't too sure about ANY day as the pheasants must be looked after. In fact, the only two who, until the middle of June, *were* available, more or less, at any time, were Carlos and myself.

But in June another potential cameraman arrived in the shape of Jean, who had come home from South Africa. In a short while she had pretty well mastered the technique of working a portable movie camera, of focussing, stopping down the lens, measuring distances and so forth.

At that time our menagerie included three young herons which we had picked up under a heronry after a gale and which had become exceeding tame, being on the most friendly terms both with us and Ramshaw. In fact, as time went on they seemed to regard the latter as a sort of guardian and would seek him out to stand by him to preen their growing feathers or even to pick up scraps of fish that we threw to them. Of these scenes of a strange bird-companionship Jean obtained, for the first time, some first-rate sequences. We had also acquired two young goats, Ham and Mah, to which, by some strange freak of bird psychology,

ALL BRITISH EAGLE

the herons took an intense dislike. Whenever the herons saw these two approaching they would greet them with raucous squawks and business-like thrusts with their sharp-pointed beaks. In the end, however, the whole collection, goats, herons, and eagle became firm friends and the pictures do, at least, show that they became a happy—if unusual—family.

Now that Jean had become proficient with the camera, we decided that when the day for serious photography arrived, she and Carlos should act as cameramen, while Esmond, Leslie, Brian and I were to handle the four eagles. Jean's main job would be to concentrate on pictures of the eagles taking off and returning to the lure, whilst Carlos—who was by now a first-rate operator—was to stand at a distance, and at some strategic point, to try for shots of any eagle—or eagles—that might come to anything like close quarters. We hoped that this scheme might result in some unique sequences.

For the time being, however, there was nothing for it but to wait, as patiently as possible, till our little crowd of helpers could be got together. Perfect days—days with blue sky dotted with white clouds—came and went and still photography of the four eagles was postponed. All we could do was to film the herons and Ramshaw enjoying a meal together; the goats and Ramshaw conversing or the whole collection indulging in some other amusing antics.

But the day at last arrived when Esmond was not playing; when, the summer being well on, Leslie could take an occasional day off; when Brian would be in the neighbourhood anyhow; when, in fact, everybody could be on parade.

One other essential we prayed for—fine weather.

As good luck would have it, the first day on which the cavalcade set out was about perfect; a bit hazy at first, but clearing later with a certain amount of cloud against the blue of the sky.

We were about in good time and all eager to make a

THE SUMMER OF 1939

start—which we could not do until each of the eagles had “cast.”*

By eleven o'clock all the eagles had spent a certain amount of time in preening and weathering, and having cast early, were ready for action. Each eagle had, of course, to be hooded and was then placed on the perch in the Ford van just as we had arranged the three eagles in the previous year. We devoutly hoped that we shouldn't be held up in the village as, if we were, we should soon be surrounded by a collection of children urging yet others to “Come and look at these parrots.”

At length we reach the top of the Downs overlooking Sundridge and Brasted and hail Chilcott who is awaiting us. We had decided that we would first fly Mr. Ramshaw and Miss America “in a cast”—or both together—so Leslie takes charge of the former whilst I undertake the less agreeable job of handling our white-headed pet.

Carlos, meanwhile, is making his way down the hill ahead of us so that if anything should happen over or near him, he can try for records whilst Jean is only about 25 yards ahead with her camera focussed on us.

“Alright, Jean?”

“Yes. All ready.”

“Alright, Leslie. Let 'em go. Take it easy though; we won't THROW them off—just let them do it in their own time.”

The hoods are struck without any hurry and the eagles sit there, glowering round, searching the country below for any sign of a suitable victim. Presently, and in quite leisurely fashion, they take off—Miss America first, Mr. Ramshaw close behind. They sail about for a while and Carlos tries for long shots of them in the sky. Then Miss America pitches on a half-dead pine-tree while Ramshaw takes perch in an oak which has such thick foliage that he is invisible.

* To “cast” is to throw up through the beak the “casting” or “pellet” which consists of any undigested remains—fur, feathers and so forth which have been swallowed with the food on the preceding day.

ALL BRITISH EAGLE

"Let's get a bit further from Ramshaw," I suggest.
"Then Jean can get a shot of him following us."

When we have proceeded some 200 yards, I utter the whistle that Ramshaw knows so well and, sure enough, out from the oak comes our faithful follower, to fly right over Jean—who has got the movie camera in action all the while—and then to pitch on another tree just ahead of us. "Move over to the right a bit," I shout to Jean, "we'll get him to fly over to that larch." Once more we move off. When I whistle, Ramshaw again obediently follows, sails overhead and pitches, just as we wanted him to, near the top of the larch.

Meanwhile, Miss America is still sitting on the pine tree. I suggest that we persuade Ramshaw to join her there.

"Ought to make a rather good picture," I remark to Leslie.

"Yes—especially if they have a scrap!" he replies.

But they don't scrap. When Ramshaw alights by the side of his American friend she bows to him by lowering her head in his direction and makes a little curtsy with a deferential movement of her wings.

"Did you get that?" I shout.

"Yes. Marvellous shot," Jean replies.

"If we don't get anything else that ought to make the trip worth while," adds Leslie optimistically.

But we did get something else that afternoon. Jean was exposing some more film on the King of the British birds and the emblem of the United States when a wild yell came from Carlos at the bottom of the hill, "He's put up a rabbit. He's got it in the picture!" shouted Brian.

"Keep your camera going, Jean!"

Jean had got the camera going in good time and had filmed the two eagles, Ramshaw first, leaving the tree and going full-speed DOWN HILL. Carlos meanwhile was keeping the fast-disappearing rabbit in his view-finder, hoping that his camera wouldn't run down.

Suddenly like a whirlwind, Ramshaw swung into the picture. Travelling at his best pace he picked the rabbit

THE SUMMER OF 1939

up as he overtook it and carried it on some 40 yards before pulling up and settling with it in his foot. At this moment Miss America, who had been close behind him, crashed in to get a share of the meal. A rough struggle then ensued, each eagle trying to tear the victim away from the other. Ramshaw, as is the way with most eagles, relied on his feet to enable him to have his way, whereas Miss America made use of that other weapon of hers that she had been in the habit of bringing into action—her beak. And, with her beak and her talons she, after a longish struggle, gained complete possession of the defunct rabbit. I had the greatest difficulty in getting it away from the one foot in which she finally held it. I managed, more by luck than judgment, to get the hood onto her head and even then, when she couldn't see what was going on, I had to exert every ounce of my strength to wrench the rabbit from her grasp—and in spite of the fact that the grip of the American eagle is not by any means so powerful as that of the others.

And now we were to fly the most powerful of them all—Coronation. I suppose that any bird which, in the wild state, kills such animals as monkeys and fair sized buck, must necessarily be extremely formidable, but one can only get a clear idea of the incredible strength of such a pet when, perched on the gloved wrist, it suddenly grips, with all its might, the three thicknesses of horse-hide leather gauntlet. She has done this several times—just as a gesture of affection, I think, when she has been perched on my arm. I know that, when at last she has lost interest in the game and has relaxed her grip so that I can set her down, I have dragged the gauntlet from a hand that has been rendered quite numb. She was, as has already been mentioned, a grand flier. When I cast her off that afternoon we all stood transfixed as she mounted almost vertically from my arm to a branch a good fifty feet from the ground. A remarkable piece of flying and something, incidentally, that none of the other eagles could do. And there she sat, waiting expectantly while Leslie and I walked through a rough grassy patch fairly close to the foot of the tree. There

ALL BRITISH EAGLE

happened to be a rabbit in this patch which suddenly went away full-tilt across the open. Coronation glided head-foremost from her perch, dived earthwards and, throwing her feet forward at the last instant, landed with an awesome "whoof—CRASH" which stopped the rabbit in its tracks—dead.

Later our formidable pet put up another demonstration : this time it illustrated the silence of her approach and suddenness of her arrival. She had again made her way to the top of a tall tree and was sitting there on the look-out for a potential victim as I walked through the bushes below. Somehow or other, the lure—half a rabbit—fell out of the falconer's bag in which it is normally carried and was being dragged along the ground by the line which was mostly wound up on the stick still inside the bag.

I was supremely unconscious of this and my thoughts were far away when I was suddenly brought back to earth by that hair-raising "whoosh—CRASH" within a foot of my heels.

Coronation had landed on the lure.

The suddenness coupled with the force of it really gave me "quite a turn" as the saying is. No wonder the Crowned eagle can catch such amazingly alert creatures as monkeys and is known as "The Leopard of the Air."

James was flown last of all that day, and, having mounted to a great height, was filmed, with a slow-motion camera, dropping out of the sky and grabbing the lure in one foot as I tried to jerk it out of his reach. In actual speed it was done in a flash, too quickly for the eye clearly to follow.

Things were not always so dramatic. Comedy sometimes crept in even where the impressive Coronation was concerned. For instance : one day Esmond and I were walking across a field as she sat on a tree ahead of us, when we saw her lower her head, glide forward and drop with the usual crash into some low-growing bushes.

"What on earth's she got now?" I muttered as we struggled towards her through the thick undergrowth.



"DON'T TELL ANYONE !"



JAMES MEETS AN ELEPHANT OUT FOR A WALK

THE SUMMER OF 1939

"No rabbits about here," Esmond gasped. "I bet it's a hare."

We drew closer, the portable movie camera all in readiness. She certainly hadn't got a hare. In fact, we couldn't see that she'd got anything except a footfull of dried leaves and grass. Curious!

We leaned forward to examine the situation more closely.

"Good heavens, look at this!"

Out of the bunch of leaves that she was clutching with such tenacity a minute tail was protruding. A tail belonging to such a tiny creature that her talons hadn't touched it. She was grasping it as one would enclose a three-penny bit in one's hand. It was nothing less (nor more) than a pigmy shrew!

Having presented Coronation with a portion of rabbit as a reward for her valour I contrived to get the tiny animal away from her. It had been squeezed to death. What a minute thing it was. Really it looked no larger than a bumble-bee. Since it is rather a rare creature in this country and because of the unusual manner of its death, I thought I would send it to the South Kensington Museum, but regret to say that it fell out of my watch-pocket (where I had thoughtfully put it so that there would be no risk of losing it) and before I could retrieve it, had been picked up and swallowed at one gulp by the ever-watchful Coronation.

On another occasion Coronation's enormous feet were directly responsible for a victim's escape. It happened when we were on the hills overlooking the marshes on the Kent side of the Thames. Wilfrid Baker and some others whose names I forget were there at the time. Our plan was to cast Coronation off towards a dead oak tree, on one of the branches of which she would be sure to pitch—so that Wilfrid, hidden under some hawthorn bushes close to the foot of the tree could shoot any crows that might gather round to "mob" her. Incidentally we had tried this dodge before and had found that it was eminently success-

ALL BRITISH EAGLE

ful. It was one way of ridding the country of what was—and is even more to-day—quite a serious menace.

We were still some quarter mile from the selected tree, when from a small bush just ahead of us a weasel scuttled across the open. Coronation spotted it and was after it in a flash. For once she succeeded in catching something otherwise than by dropping on it from a height.

Great excitement prevailed.

"Well done," cried Wilfrid who was much interested in the preservation of game. "That was a quick piece of work if you like!"

"A gos* couldn't have done it better," someone else joined in. "Jolly good show."

As usual on such occasions we all trotted forward to see, at close quarters, what was going on. The weasel was certainly held in a powerful grip. Any less wiry animal would have been suffocated by this time. And, to tell the truth, we never thought for a moment that it could be anything BUT dead. Coronation evidently thought so too, for she relaxed her grip on the limp little body and prepared to place it under her foot so that she might conveniently break into it.

"Well, that's out of the way," Wilfrid remarked optimistically. "I hope she'll enjoy it."

Unhappily she never had the chance of doing so, for, without the least warning, the weasel suddenly came to life, twisted and wriggled its way from under her foot, doubled back beneath her and, before we could collect ourselves, was away, in first-rate style, towards a near-by clump of bushes. Coronation tried—in a somewhat half-hearted sort of way, to get up with it again but failed ignominiously. Need I mention that we stood for some time regarding each other—silently!

With four eagles in action almost every day we naturally saw some astonishing incidents during that peaceful summer of 1939; but how often had the camera been left behind when we most needed it! Oh, for a movie record of James

*A goshawk—particularly apt at catching ground game.

THE SUMMER OF 1939

when he took the cock-pheasant in mid-air! An unforgettable sight. He must have been soaring at a height of some 1,000 or 1,500 feet. So high, anyhow, that he looked no bigger than a rook. We, meanwhile, were trying to put up a hare for him. Suddenly he keeled over and came sweeping down straight towards us. "What on earth's he after?" I muttered as I watched his oncoming form. As I spoke a cock-pheasant, which James had spotted, rose from the thin rough grass in front of us and went away in its noisy whirring style towards the nearest covert.

James never flapped his wings, never apparently exerted himself in the slightest, but gained such terrific impetus by dropping out of the sky, that as he overtook the retreating pheasant he shot out one foot and seized it with a "whop" which we could easily hear from where we stood. That James was able to see the pheasant, crouched as it was amongst surroundings that harmonized extraordinarily well with its plumage, rather borders on the fantastic. But he provided an even more remarkable proof of the incredible power of an eagle's eye. I had been flying him one day, and, on the way home, was feeding him on the back part of a hare. I noticed that he was having trouble in swallowing one of the spiky vertebral bones, and to help him out of his difficulty, picked this awkwardly shaped piece from his beak and threw it onto the grass. Some minutes later, as we were crossing a piece of ploughed land, I saw that he was again bothered by a similar bone—which I likewise removed from his beak and threw onto the ground.

On the following day I flew James over the same area. Soon he was up at a considerable height making a grand picture with his enormous wings and their widely separated primaries. Chilcott and Esmond were both there at the time and I remember turning to the latter and saying that I thought I'd better lure him down as he might soon be out of control. Hardly had I spoken than we saw that he was coming back to earth on his own volition; serenely and comfortably as though there was no hurry. Soon he

ALL BRITISH EAGLE

had pitched on a grassy slope and we trotted forward to discover the cause of his descent. When we reached him we found that he was trying to swallow one of the pieces of vertebrae that I had thrown away on the previous day. He had actually seen it from the height at which he had been soaring.

I once more took the piece of bone away from him and kicked it into the ground. Later we flew him again. Once more he mounted into the sky, climbing so high that I again began to think it was about time that I lured him down again. Once more, he came gliding back to earth to settle, this time, on the ploughed land that we had crossed on the previous day. We found that he—as we had guessed he would be—was trying to swallow the other piece of bone we had thrown away! It seemed—and still seems—almost incredible.

But I believe that all eagles as well as a number of other birds, are gifted with equally remarkable sight; only it happens that the Martial Eagle, because of its habit of soaring at great heights, is more likely to give spectacular demonstrations.

Meanwhile, the weeks rolled on, and in spite of the clouds of unrest which had continued to gather over the European horizon, war seemed a long way off. Some said that Hitler was bluffing—that he wasn't ready for a war anyhow. Others—and how well I remember the voice of one of them over the telephone—were quite sure that there would not be a war: "I feel it in my bones that such a calamity couldn't befall the world." Still others, more psychically-inclined, were more downright and closed any discussion on the possibility of war with an imperious "There will not be a war."

And so, thus re-assured, it was very pleasant to drive into Sevenoaks to get a piece of shin-of-beef for our pets or to take one of the latter out to try for some action sequences. Towards the end of August we had an unforgettable day with the four of them. Our entire gang was again present. Jean, Esmond, Leslie, Carlos, Brian, Chilcott and myself.



FRED ALLEN, MR. RAMSHAW AND CAPTAIN KNIGHT

WAR DECLARED

Beautiful weather, the eagles in keen going order and hundreds of feet of film exposed. I remember that, on the homeward journey, we talked lightly of the chances of our having secured some worth-while shots and consoled ourselves with the knowledge that we could always come again and try for more and better results.

Additional results, however, were not obtained since, a few days later, we were again at war with Germany.

CHAPTER IX

WAR DECLARED

HARDLY had Chamberlain announced over the radio, on that fateful morning of September 3rd, 1939, that we were once more at war with Germany than I, together with a great many thousands of other people, heard the howling of air-raid sirens. So soon? I could only suppose that the Luftwaffe had been lined up all ready to take off, waiting for the signal: the signal which would notify them that Great Britain had been rash enough to declare war on the omnipotent Hitler and his belligerent followers. They were certainly losing no time, I reflected, and might at any moment be over in their hundreds. I wondered what would be the correct thing to do in such an event. Then I vaguely remembered seeing on the park paling a notice giving instructions as to what action should be taken if enemy planes came over. I supposed I ought to get under cover. The cellar, of course, would be the sort of place. But no planes had yet made their appearance.

I found myself thinking of the evenings Leslie and I used to spend in the garden-room with something to smoke and something to sip at; talking about the possibility and effects of war—a topic which we continually discussed. We had come to the conclusion that in the event of an air raid, we might just as well continue to sit where we were as to run out into the garden and crawl into a shelter. We

ALL BRITISH EAGLE

had old-fashioned wooden shutters for all the windows downstairs, so the black-out was perfect and we felt that if a bomb were to hit our particular house out of the whole of Kent it would be, as the Americans say, "Just too bad."

Meanwhile, I thought I had better go out and read the A.R.P. notice more carefully than I had done hitherto. What a pity Jean had not come home before this, I thought, as I made my way out of the house and across the garden. Not that I wanted her to be in a raid, of course, but she was staying with friends at Norwood which might be a bit too close to London. If Jerry did come over he would probably give London a worse pasting than he would give us at Bessels Green. After all, we were over twenty miles from London Bridge—and I should like to have had her with me anyway.

Turning out of our side gate into the lane, I saw that a man and a woman were already reading the notice. Every now and then they would glance into the sky as though to make sure that the Luftwaffe was not already overhead. I joined them, and for a while studied the notice in silence. I really forget what it said except that cars must stop—under some sort of cover—and that people must retire from the roads. So I suggested to my companions in distress that they might like to come into the house and sit comfortably until the all-clear went. They thanked me in a rather nervous way and came inside for a while but failed to settle down. They seemed to be embarrassed, spoke in monosyllables and refused any sort of refreshment. Presently one of them remarked that they must be moving along or they would be late for lunch. I told them they might stay on if they liked, for it was still early, but they, perhaps suffering from some form of claustrophobia, decided to leave. They certainly seemed much relieved when they got into the open air.

I forget when the all-clear went. I know that I made my way into the Park and tried temporarily to forget the momentous situation in busying myself with the eagles. But I could not entirely detach my mind from the thought

WAR DECLARED

of what lay ahead of us. I found myself thinking of that other occasion, twenty-five years before, when news of our being at war with Germany had come to us. Twenty-five years. I had been staying with the Bakers near the mouth of the Thames and had picked up a copy of the *Daily Mail*; to be staggered by what I read: "At war with Germany." In the following month I had been overseas with the 1st H.A.C. What should I be doing in a month THIS time? And what should I do about Ramshaw in war-time? WAR-time?

I tried to forget all that and to get on with the eagles. . . . "Here you are James; some clean water for your bath." At war, eh? That'll mean finding homes for all the eagles, I suppose. "You've got your swivel tangled up in your jesses, Coronation. If you CAN get into trouble, you do, don't you?" That means, I suppose, that Leslie will be back in the R.A.F. ! Brian will be in it, too. Esmond will still be sticking to the stage, of course—if things are like they were in the last war.

"You want a fresh piece of turf on your mound, Ramshaw." I suppose there'll be rationing. . . . Still, there'll be chickens' heads—for a while ! Could I get back into it myself? After all I did go with the British Military Mission to the United States in the last war, which might be some recommendation. Or am I too old? "Try that, Ramshaw; that'll be nice and cool for the old feet." This is going to change things. I wonder if the American tour will stand !

Rather different if it does; convoys and boat-drill and escorting destroyers and all that. Should hate to be on a destroyer. I watched them in the last war. But, on the other hand, perhaps I should remain on this side of the Atlantic.

When I had had a chance of thinking things over calmly, I came to the conclusion that I could not expect to keep four eagles any longer. I should be going abroad, perhaps; and there would be the question of food. Ramshaw might be kept on. I ought not to let HIM go. As long as chickens'

ALL BRITISH EAGLE

heads or cartridges were available he wouldn't starve. Had not Leslie and I, in our continual talks about the consequences for us of a war, so often said, "Well, if there's a food shortage I suppose we shall manage to get an occasional starling or grey squirrel or something to eat," and I imagined that to keep one eagle ought not to be asking too much.

But I decided that the others must be disposed of. To whom? I didn't know. I could hardly expect any of my friends to keep an eagle for me whilst I was away in America, for, apart from the question of food there would always be the possibility of the calling up of anyone who would agree to lend a hand in looking after it.

In the end it was arranged that Miss America should be returned to the London Zoo; that James should be placed under the care of my friend "George" Gillespie of the Scottish Zoological Park, and that Leslie, who didn't expect to be "back in it" for some time, should take care of Coronation.

Miss America was the first to leave. We—Phyllis Barclay-Smith and I—took her up to the Zoo in a crate one day in late October. What a contrast to the afternoon on which I had taken her away! Then there had been crowds of people sitting in the spring sunshine, drinking tea and chatting, quite oblivious it would seem, to the various exhibits surrounding them. How amused I had been when, in response to shouts of "The Panda! The Panda!" they had left their chairs, their tea, their friends, and rushed to get a glimpse of the famous animal which was looking unconcernedly out of the window of a car in which it passed. Then there had been children queuing up for rides on the elephant or the camel, while others took it in turn to drive in a little carriage drawn by a llama.

Now things were different. It was autumn and war-time. A heavy fog shrouded London and Regent's Park didn't escape it. There was no one having tea. There was no one about at all. No elephant, no camel, and no jolly children waiting for rides. The only animal we noticed

WAR DECLARED

was a dejected-looking bison huddled up in the corner of its yard : the only human beings a little group of men, vaguely discernible through the fog, practising the extinguishing of incendiary bombs.

We waited until Miss America had been transferred from her crate to her new home—a fairly large cage—and then turned to leave. I remember that our breath condensed on the chilly air and that I remarked “ Well, that’s that.”

For the next few months I managed quite well with the remaining three eagles ; chickens’ heads were generally forthcoming from the traditional Sevenoaks Poultry Shop, and friends sometimes sent round defunct rats or pigeons, rabbits or chickens that had met a mysterious death. And still the Germans did not come over to annihilate us. It was, fact, quite a happy period. Jean was at school at Goudhurst, only about 20 miles away, and I managed to see her from time to time. Esmond came down pretty frequently and we spent a good deal of our time in editing the new film and in flying Rhubarb—a Goshawk, which was a very stylish performer, and which seldom failed to secure something to take home for the larder. Rhubarb hailed from Germany, and, characteristically enough, was ever ready to tackle any potential victim that she felt she could surely overcome. Can it be that because of this tyrannical disposition or of her nationality that Ramshaw, breaking loose one day, set upon her and tore her in pieces.

A week or so before the opening of the lecture season I decided that something had got to be done about the rest of our live stock. The herons no longer required any attention, for they had reverted, almost completely, to the wild state. Occasionally, one of them would come home, perhaps dropping in a zig-zagging stunt flight out of the sky, to see if there was any food about, but, generally speaking, they had learned to fend for themselves. The goats were given away. We were sorry to see the last of them, for they had been the most engaging pets. Ham had the more character of the two and would follow us into the park, come to heel

ALL BRITISH EAGLE

when called, indulge in games of "I'm the King of the Castle," and even put up—accidentally—rabbits which Ramshaw sometimes managed to catch. The last I heard of Ham was that he had been seen pulling along a child's carriage on Hampstead Heath.

I took James up to Edinburgh myself and handed him over to Gillespie who, I knew, would take every possible care of his new and precious charge. The Scottish Zoological Park is most fortunately placed. Deep hollows have been scooped out of the rocks that rise from the far side of it and great natural-looking enclosures thus provided. James was to have one of these enclosures all to himself. Judging by what we saw as we wheeled James along on a barrow to his new home I should imagine that his subsequent life there must have been far from dull—providing he is able to derive any pleasure out of watching the antics of others. A Golden Eagle which we passed, was peering through the wire of its enclosure at a peacock which, free to wander where it would, danced up and down with bobbing head as though jeering at the less-fortunate prisoner. A band of monkeys, engaged in searching amongst each other's fur for any edible items, burst into a concerted shriek of frenzied terror and rushed for cover when James spread his wings. Instantly they had recognised an ancestral enemy. In a nearby enclosure a lioness was creeping along through tall grass and rocks with a family of three youngsters eagerly stumbling along in the rear whilst just outside an elephant, out for an airing, slowly sank onto its knees, collapsed sideways and proceeded—legs in air—to roll the already flat asphalt even flatter, a gesture which seemed not in the least to perturb or even surprise, its kindly keeper. Funniest of all, and I hope James was half as amused by the sight as we were, was a party of Emperor Penguins taking a stroll, with all the dignity and stateliness of real aristocrats, along the promenade. They seemed carefully to avoid looking in the direction of their bourgeoisistic black-footed relatives busily paddling in the shallow water at the edge of their pool. This, then, was to be James's war-time home,

WAR DECLARED

a home in which he would find much diversion and where he would meet with every possible consideration.

So James left us. Now we had little live stock left. No goats, no herons, no Rhubarb, no Miss America, no James. All we had, in fact, were Ramshaw and Coronation, and when a few weeks later, Leslie took over the latter, Ramshaw was the only member of our menagerie left. I continued to fly him on most days and he generally acquitted himself in his usual irreproachable style, although I must admit, a regrettable incident occurred one afternoon. We were flying him in the park and quite a little crowd of people, including Leslie and Jean, had turned up to see him in action. As usual, we let him fly onto a tree and set out to put up a rabbit. He sat, for some time, looking down to see if there was anything doing, but presently, since we failed to find one, spread his wings and—to our intense surprise—sailed off in the direction of a row of houses some quarter of a mile away. "What on earth's he doing, Leslie?" I shouted. "Can't imagine," came the reply. Suddenly I remembered, "There are some chickens in one of those gardens! Now what have we done?" Without further ado we all raced across towards the row of houses. Of course we could never get there in anything like the time it would take Ramshaw. But we wanted to be there as quickly as possible; perhaps to prevent the death of a chicken at the feet of Ramshaw or the death of Ramshaw at the hands of an irate poultry-keeper. As we got nearer we could see that excitement was already running high. People were shouting wildly, a woman picked a child out of a perambulator and rushed indoors with it to safety. Leslie was ahead of me. I saw him vault over a low garden fence and rush towards where I believed the chicken-run to be. We soon followed him and found ourselves with the rest of the followers, gazing into the chicken-run. Most of the chickens, I believe, had seen the approaching danger and had managed to retire into their shelter. A few though, had taken refuge under a heap of wire-netting that was lying in the enclosure where they could be easily seen but

ALL BRITISH EAGLE

couldn't be got at. Ramshaw had pitched on this heap and was glaring down at the three or four chickens underneath.

Meanwhile a boy seized a stick and stepped forward as though to crack Ramshaw over the head with it, but, with stick uplifted, seemed suddenly to think better of the idea and retreated in an embarrassed sort of way. It was all pretty awful. Meanwhile, Leslie and I had jumped over into the chicken-run to re-capture Ramshaw. As we did so we breathed a sigh of relief. At least he hadn't killed any of the hens. We had some difficulty in disentangling him from the roll of wire, for he, within a couple of inches of a crouching hen, was gripping it with both feet. Eventually I got him free. "I'm awfully sorry," I began, addressing one of the women looking on. "We were flying him in the park. I didn't realise there were chickens so close." Thank goodness, he hasn't got one, anyway." I forgot whether the lady addressed replied or not. I know I was the target for some very ugly looks. There were half-whispered comments too, accompanied by further unfriendly glances. "What a frightful shermozzle," I remarked to Leslie as we made our way home.

Talking it over we agreed that we must be more careful where we flew Ramshaw in future. Chicken killing in war-time—particularly—wouldn't do. In future we must not fly him if there were any chickens in the neighbourhood, and, even then, we mustn't keep him waiting too long while we tried to turn up a rabbit.

"What luck he didn't get one," I added. "We should never have heard the end of it."

Even though he hadn't caught one, we hadn't, on that occasion, quite heard the end of it, for a few days later I received an indignant letter from the owner of the chickens, in which he said that "the chickens have been put off their lay" that "an account will be rendered to you accordingly, and for which I must hold you responsible, and insist on payment," and that "it is sheer cruelty to allow such a bird to be at large." However, I never heard anything further.

In due course the 1939-40 Lecture Tour commenced,

WAR DECLARED

and until the middle of December I travelled about Great Britain pretty extensively.

Ramshaw usually remained at home unless specially asked for. I had not made it a habit to take him with me on these tours, perhaps because I had once met with a rebuff when it had been suggested that he should make a personal appearance. "Oh, NO. PLEASE don't bring the eagle," had been the reply, "our audience would be TERRIFIED." So, Ramshaw, as I have said, generally remained at home.

How differently had the idea of his being present been received in the United States! When Secretaries of any organizations we were to visit heard that a live, trained Golden Eagle was to be part of the programme, they had fairly jumped at the possibilities presented by such a unique attraction.

Newspaper reporters and photographers would call at our hotel to get a story and take a picture of the unusual guest. Curious—the different attitude in the two countries; perhaps it is significant of the difference in character or that we are slower at the up-take! Be it as it may, he is, in this year of 1943, doing in England what he did in the United States fourteen years ago.

When at that time Ramshaw did happen to attend one of our shows here in England he invariably made a great impression; spreading his wings on request; flying across the stage to my hand; allowing children to stroke him and standing to attention as a final gesture.

Ten days before Christmas the tour came to an end, and for a while we had a very jolly time. Jean came home for the holidays; we had a real plum-pudding, which every one helped to stir; the place was decorated with holly and mistletoe, and what with butchers' shops exhibiting great sides of beef decorated with red, white and blue rosettes and the poulterers vying with one another with vast collections of pheasants, geese, ducks, chickens and turkeys, it was really just like Christmas time.

I sometimes found myself wondering how long such a lavish situation would last. Anyhow, we had a wonderful

ALL BRITISH EAGLE

time until, at the end of December, I embarked for the United States to fulfil my lecture contract under the direction of Colston Leigh of New York City.

CHAPTER X

AMERICA AHoy !

OUR first war-time crossing of the Atlantic turned out to be uneventful, though I must say the journey was not unaccompanied by certain feelings of apprehensiveness. We paraded daily at our boat stations in our life-belts and were told to carry the latter with us ALWAYS, but as we proceeded and nothing untoward occurred, the once treasured belt would be left forgotten in the lounge or the dining saloon. In the end, perhaps becoming complacent, we most of us left the irksome things in our cabins.

Ramshaw occupied a whole cabin in some disused crew's quarters in which he had room to fly from one perch to another and where he could indulge in some sort of a bath in the wash-basins. During the early part of the trip I took him out onto a small lower deck for his daily airing, where, undisturbed by the attentions of interested passengers, he could enjoy the daylight and fresh air.

As the days passed, and the confidence of us passengers returned, the word, as usual, got round that there was a tame eagle on the ship. More and more frequently I would be asked whether so-and-so might see my charge. Several people remembered seeing him at the Polytechnic Theatre when I had him up there as Exhibit No. 1 when I was showing a film which concerned his activities, and were eager to renew the acquaintance.

Some of the more sporting type ventured to trail down into the bowels of the ship to see him, but the journey was sometimes inclined to be hazardous, and during the second half of the crossing Ramshaw appeared every afternoon in the smoke-room and caused much amusement by his

AMERICA AHOY!

antics ; tearing up and swallowing his daily meal ; flying from the back of one chair to another or pretending to "kill" the fur-mat in front of the fireplace. In due course we reached New York. I had been careful to obtain the permit for his entry into the country and had no trouble with the Customs inspectors. It was really most amusing to watch the face of the inspector as I gingerly raised the lid of the crate so that he might see that it really was an eagle.

"Gee ! It's an eagle alright. What a bird !"

I would then raise the lid so that he might get a better view—and the eagle might make a dash for freedom.

"Hey, close it down ! I've seen enough." And down would go the lid. I believe I might have had a whole collection of contraband stuff under the floor of the crate and no one would have been the wiser. On the other hand, knowing what Customs Inspectors are, it was probably as well that I didn't try any such tricks. Actually I had nothing to declare except the films, and had arranged for the Shipping Agency to take charge of them and have them inspected.

That done we made our way to the street and boarded one of those magnificent taxis that all American cities boast, and—with Ramshaw in his crate safely strapped on behind—drove up-town to the dear old Gotham. Visitors to the United States are often asked what made the deepest impression on them when they arrived in New York. Some answer the skyscrapers ; some the quality of the sunlight ; some the magnificence of Grand Central Station.

I know what impressed ME most on my arrival there in the winter of 1939 : the Lights !

As we drove up Seventh Avenue I looked out of the cab window bewildered by the brilliance of shops and cafes. When we emerged into Times Square I uttered a gasp of astonishment. Broadway, with its blaze of electric signs and moving advertisements is always tremendously impressive even in peace time, but, after the blackness of London it seemed fantastic—unreal.

Hardly had we pulled up at the Gotham than the door of

ALL BRITISH EAGLE

the cab was flung open and the voice of the doorman enquired cheerily, "Back again, Captain! Glad to see you. Where's Mr. Ramshaw?"

Home again! At least back to a home from home. All my friends seemed glad to greet me and Ramshaw. "We're sure glad you're safely back, Captain. And Mr. Ramshaw, too." "Nice to see you again, Captain. What sort of a trip did you have?" Ramshaw, still in his crate, was brought from the cab into the hotel, was lifted into the elevator and whisked up to the 21st floor. Willing hands helped me up the flight of stairs leading to the roof. What a view! Central Park, lit by innumerable lights; the Park Central Hotel; the R.C.A. building, with a luminous glow over all. Ramshaw's home was the same little hut which had been allocated to him after his flight over the City. Normally, it is used as a store for tins of paint, brooms and such oddments, but now everything had been cleared out and a sizeable perch installed in their place.

Having seen that Ramshaw was comfortably housed for the night, I went to the same room that I had so often had before—No. 2101—had a clean-up and descended to the 3rd floor to look up my friends in the British Club. We had had a very gratifying welcome on our arrival, but now there was a REAL reception! So many of the lads were there! Humphrey Lee, Gibbon, the two Coopers, Don Fraser, Warroll, and a bunch of others, playing billiards, standing at the bar or just "sitting around." "Hullo, Sniper! Grand to see you. Have you got old Ramsey with you? Have a drink?" "Well, if it isn't old Sniper—how's that ruddy bird? Have a drink?"

And what a selection of liquid refreshment there was! Dry Martinis, Clover Clubs, Pink Gins, Manhattans, etc., etc. Overcome by such hospitality, I hesitated. . . .

"Well, I think, since I'm back in New York, I'll have a Manhattan."

"Oh, don't have that. It's a lady's drink."

"Well, I'll have one anyway. Just for auld acquaintance's sake."

AMERICA AHOY!

So we started a jolly evening. I had to tell of what was happening at home, of our crossing and of what I thought of the general situation. Later on, some half-dozen of us made our way down to the Grill Room to get some food. There I was asked by yet more of my acquaintances how Ramshaw was ; how things were at home ; what sort of a crossing we had had and how long the phoney war would last.

Just as we were about to begin our dinner I caught sight of yet another of my acquaintances—a German whom I had been in the habit of greeting in true militaristic fashion: smart clicking of heels, stiff position of attention, elbows into the sides, fingers doubled, thumbs in line with the seams of the trousers. He had always co-operated in this foolishness, but in the German fashion ; elbows out, fingers stretched, backs of the hands to the front. Thinking we should play this little game as usual I marched up to him, brought my right heel with a snap against my left and remained upright—still.

To my surprise he hurried nervously to my side and whispered in my ear: “I do not click my heels any more.”

Of course not ! But I hadn't thought of that.

We had, as usual, a marvellous dinner and a cheery evening afterwards up in the Club. The party finished with a parade of any members who happened to be present and who felt sufficiently abandoned to participate. Armed with billiard cues they lined up and were put through some handling of arms and close-order drill. I suddenly discovered it was very late and that I had forgotten to ring up several friends whom I had promised to notify of our safe arrival.

For two or three days Ramshaw and I took things easily. We had to wait for the films to be passed by the Censor, and, in any case, had no “dates” to fill for just over a week.

A good deal of this time was spent in writing to those at home and to my acquaintances in various parts of the States. As for the evenings ; I do not think that one passed

ALL BRITISH EAGLE

without my being entertained in the real New York tradition by one or other of my extremely hospitable friends.

But, at length, our first series of engagements was at hand. The films, satisfactorily inspected by the Customs officials had been delivered at the Gotham, and everything being in order we, in due course, set out. Such a tour, naturally, involves a great deal of travelling and we visited such widely-separated places as Dayton, O.; Chicago, Ill.; Menomonie, Wis.; Richmond, Va.; and San Francisco, Cal.

All exceedingly interesting, of course, but, with an eagle as a travelling companion, somewhat wearing. There was always the business of getting to the railway depot at least half-an-hour before the train was scheduled to leave so as to check Ramshaw at the baggage-room and to be as sure as one could be that he was on the right train. In this country it is easy enough to get a porter to take him to the guard's van just before the train leaves and to be certain that he hasn't been left behind. In the States it is different. There things are done by a system of "checking." You "check in" at an hotel when you arrive and you "check out" when you leave. You also "check" your baggage—including eagles, if you carry any—at the baggage room at the place of departure and you check it out at the baggage room at your destination. You can even "check in on your stop-off."

How often did I wonder if Ramshaw had been put onto the right train! Very infrequently he has been sent astray. In such a case I was consoled by the suggestion that he might, perhaps, be on the next train—due three or four hours later! Yet, somehow or other he invariably turned up—in time!

Then there sometimes arose the question as to where Ramshaw could be accommodated for the night. Occasionally he was left at the building where we happened to be showing; sometimes he stayed in the cellar or garage or box-room of a friend. On other occasions he was smuggled, crate and all, up into my hotel bedroom where his

AMERICA AHOY!

crate was placed on layers of newspaper in the bath-tub so that he could perch on the former without risk of soiling anything.

We got through somehow, and had a lot of fun too. At several places Ramshaw enjoyed a flight in the near-by country but only when I had assured myself that there were no chickens in the neighbourhood. Sometimes we did our show in very large theatres and before very large audiences. The National Geographic Society pack in something like 4,000 members; the Philadelphia Forum is almost equally huge, while the Field Museum in Chicago or the Natural History Museum of New York cannot be far behind. And there were many other similar and lesser organizations.

Yet, no matter where we went or how noisy the audience, Ramshaw did his stuff, flying at his will in the theatre or hall, returning to my hand from wherever he might have pitched and standing to attention as a final gesture.

During our previous visits he had succeeded in making such a favourable impression—a far deeper one than I, or the movies had managed to create—that I believe a large proportion of any audience came along more to see Ramshaw being put through his paces than for any other reason. I began to think that Charles Tebay had been right when he said—"Don't dare to come on a lecture tour to this country without old Ramshaw." Strangely enough, neither James nor Coronation, in spite of their more showy plumage and dramatic appearance had anything like Ramshaw's appeal. Is it his dignity, his poise, his imperturbability, that makes him so popular? Somehow he has a "way with him" that the others just do not possess.

Of course Ramshaw did not accompany me on all my escapades. He was left behind, for instance, when one evening in Chicago some friends tried to frighten me by daring me to go through a sort of "haunted house" attached to a restaurant. I stumbled along a draughty passage in complete darkness to be confronted without warning by a dreadful spectre—a living skeleton which waved its arms, groaned and suddenly disappeared. Further on, an icy wind shot

ALL BRITISH EAGLE

up from somewhere in the floor and at one point a blood-curdling scream—right in my ear—rent the darkness.

My friends had insisted on my going through this "haunted house" in the fervent hope that I should emerge pale and trembling after the ordeal. To their disappointment I came out smiling broadly if a little unsteadily. To tell the truth, I had done so well on their hospitality that I was past minding ghosts that waved and groaned or skeletons that gesticulated. In my happy state they just struck me as being irresistibly funny. I wonder how Ramshaw would have re-acted. But, of course, he would have come through it all as imperturbably as he comes through any other situation in which he meets sudden lights and curious forms that utter strange noises.

Just before we left the States we appeared on what I have been told by a number of American friends is the most important Radio programme of all—the Fred Allen hour. And we only just managed it.

I had expected that we would be in the States for at least another month and was brought up by a considerable jolt when I received a cable asking me whether I would be prepared to go to France to help entertain the troops which were waiting for the Germans to launch their offensive. I at once decided to catch the first available ship for home and to cancel any engagements that might have been booked for subsequent dates.

I found there was a ship due to leave in seven days' time. But our appearance on the Fred Allen hour was in seven days' time too. We could not do both and I was at my wits' end to know what to do for the best. In the end all was arranged satisfactorily, for the sailing of the ship happened to be deferred for 24 hours, so that we could take part in the Fred Allen show late in the evening and catch the ship early the next morning. A perfect arrangement. Meanwhile I had just two more engagements to fill, and the tour—as far as lectures were concerned—would be ended. During the off-days I spent a good deal of time up on the roof of the hotel with Ramshaw, showing him to friends,

FILM
FRANÇAIS

CHANTONS QUAND MÊME !

ENGLISH
SUB-TITLED

LET'S SING JUST THE SAME!

Chantons quand même!... quels sont donc ceux qui, en ces temps troublés que nous vivons, donnent ce mot d'ordre?

Ceux qui seuls en ont le droit: les "Tommies" et les "Poilus".

N'est-ce pas là la meilleure façon qu'ils ont de prouver leur optimisme et leur inébranlable confiance dans la victoire?



Let's sing just the same!... who are the ones to give you such a captivating order despite the uneasy period we're going through?

The only ones who can give it with justice: the "Tommies" and the "Poilus".

Isn't it the best way to prove their optimism and their positive confidence in victory?

" Ça ira mieux demain "

" A sans souci les Fillettes "

" Bonjour, Tommy "

tels sont les refrains qu'entonnent joyeusement tommies et poilus, dans....

" CHANTONS QUAND MÊME "

Le premier film franco-britannique réalisé cette année.

Une œuvre saine, optimiste.

Des interprètes de classe... un spectacle gai, réconfortant, avec

" You'll have a better time to morrow "

" Don't worry babies "

" Hello, Tommy "

that's the english songs they cheer out heartily in ...

" LET'S SING JUST THE SAME "

The first franco-british film produced this year.

A optimist and healthy work.

A first rate cast... a cheerful and strengthening show with

ANNIE VERNAY - PAUL CAMBO - MARIE BIZET - NOEL ROQUEVERT

JACK WILSON - CLAUDE ROY - GUY BERRY - RAYMOND CORDY, etc.

du 10 au 16 Mai 1940

From 10th May to 16th May 1940

CASINO-ARRAS

SOIRÉE chaque jour à 19 heures 45.

Every day, show at 7 h. 45 P.M.

Sunday and Monday afternoon's show at 1. and 4.15 P.M.

MATINÉE Dimanche et Fêtes à 13 et 16 h. 45.

For english soldiers an extra show on Saturday the 11th May at 5 P.M.

C'est un Film distribué par M.M. BRUITTE & DELEMAR

ARRAS SOUVENIR



MR. RAMSHAW AND THE EVACUEES—HOODED

AMERICA AHOY!

giving him a shower-bath or getting him to pose for photographers. I imagine some first-rate photographs must have been secured on various occasions, but I seldom received the copies that were always promised.

Meanwhile, the time for our appearance on the Fred Allen hour drew nearer. If I remember rightly the HOUR was to advertise the virtues of a production known as *Sal Hepatica*, which is a medicinal salt. A script was prepared and we spent a good deal of time in rehearsing what seemed to me a very simple undertaking. We thought it would be a good idea if, as a grand finale, Ramshaw flew from my arm to some perch and then back to my arm again. It would show that he really was a perfectly feathered, honest-to-goodness eagle and not just some poor spiritless creature that had had all energy, all vivacity knocked out of it by a life spent in a cage. Accordingly, a perch was fixed up behind the orchestra so that, when Ramshaw flew to it from my arm, he would miss the heads of some of the players by only a few inches.

In the first place though, Fred was to ask me some questions which were to lead to a recital of the dreadful occasion on which Ramshaw had broken loose and sailed about over New York and I had to tell how he had temporarily vanished from my sight over the R.C.A. building. Then we held a conversation on the following lines :—

“How did you get him back, Captain?”

“Well, Fred, next day he pitched on a taxi on Madison Avenue—been trying to catch a pigeon I dare say, and the taxi-driver rushed up to a policeman to tell him that a fierce eagle had perched on his taxi and that, at any moment, it might kill a child. What were they going to do? The police officer had calmly replied: ‘Oh, sure! That’ll be that eagle that escaped yesterday. Come on—let’s go and get him.’ You see, Fred, my manager had notified the police that Ramshaw was taking a constitutional over their city, so they knew he was at large. And they got him back by throwing a coat over him. Pretty good work, don’t you think?”

"I'll say! But you were very lucky to get him back, weren't you? After all, he might have flown clear away. I suppose he COULD have done?"

"Oh, of course. He can fly alright. Would you like to see him fly now, Fred?"

"Why—er—yes, if you're sure he won't grab somebody in the audience!"

"Don't worry! I won't let him go anywhere near the audience. I'll just tell him to fly over the band."

It must be understood that we had rehearsed Ramshaw's flight to the perch and had even gone to the extent of collecting a little crowd of volunteers to sit in the chairs which the orchestra would in due course occupy, so that Ramshaw would be accustomed to flying over—and very close to—actual human beings in order to reach his perch. We had tried this several times and he had never failed to fly straight to the perch.

"Shall I let him go, Fred?" I enquired.

"Sure, and I hope the band will be able to do its stuff afterwards!"

"All right! 'Ramshaw! Fly to that perch beyond the band!'"

Raising my left arm—with Ramshaw perched on my wrist—I swung forward and cast him off. I had naturally supposed that he would, as he had always done and has always done since, fly at once to the pre-arranged perch. Ramshaw started well enough, and almost pitched on the selected perch, but, playfully changing his mind, made a steep banking turn and swung out over the very large audience. He sailed on, rising in the air as he did so, until he was within a few feet of the upper circle, banked again and turned on the homeward stretch to finish up on a partition some 20 feet high at the side of the stage. Much applause followed this demonstration of aerobatics.

The audience thought it was part of the show! Meanwhile I was in an awful stew. He was out of reach and I had nothing with which to lure him down. And we were holding up the show. Then something happened which

WE JOIN THE B.E.F.

caused roars of laughter from the vast audience. People sitting in the front seats, almost under where Ramshaw had pitched were obviously sceptical as to whether he was house-trained or not, and began to look for seats which they judged would be at a safer range. The rest of the audience howled again. Every time that Ramshaw flirted his tail two or three more people would hurriedly seek fresh seats. This was terrible. We were on the air.

Our time was already up. In desperation I gave a bell-boy a dollar to run out and get me a piece of beef. I had to shout to overcome the peals of laughter. Ramshaw was still on the partition acting his part. It might all have been arranged. Meanwhile the boy had not come back with the beef. Something had got to be done ! We couldn't wait any longer.

"Quickly ! this smaller table on top of that larger one. Give me a hand-up !" . . . Yes, I had got his jesses ! And as the applause died down and Fred announced the beginning of the next item, I lifted Ramshaw from his lofty perch and hurried him into oblivion.

CHAPTER XI

WE JOIN THE B.E.F.

EARLY on the morning after our first appearance on the Fred Allen programme Ramshaw and I said "Good-bye" to as many of our friends as we could locate, piled our luggage onto a taxi and set out on our homeward journey. "Good-bye, Sniper ; happy crossing." "Good luck, Ramshaw, come back soon !"

Later that day we glided down the Hudson, past the Statue of Liberty towards the Atlantic. The thought that Ramshaw and I were to visit France and to put on our show for the troops who, tired of the phoney war, were becoming "browned off", appealed to me immensely. Perhaps I should see that familiar, war-torn country again :

ALL BRITISH EAGLE

Albert, Beaumont-Hamel, Miraumont, Loupart Wood, Bapaume and those villages that had been blotted out, and since rebuilt. I looked forward to it all with tremendous enthusiasm.

Eventually, after an uneventful crossing, we found ourselves back at home again.

I discovered that Ramshaw and I were to proceed to France in a fortnight's time, under the auspices of ENSA. A good deal of the respite was spent in arranging passport, identity cards, etc., and in taking Ramshaw out for a fly round over the Kentish countryside. Our little holiday soon drew to a close and the morning arrived which found us in a train—en route for the land of Liberty, Equality and Fraternity. A few hours later we found ourselves on the other side of the English Channel : in France. I still had no idea of our destination, but gathered that we were to travel by road and that we should set out as soon as our various papers had been examined. After considerable delay we left in convoy and it was not until we had actually started that I learned that we were bound for Arras—a place that I suppose most British soldiers at least passed through during the last war, but which I was fortunate enough to avoid although we were just south of it in 1916-17.

A good many miles had been covered before I saw any land-marks that I could recognise, but when we passed through a village I had known there was no mistaking it. It was Fienvillers, sure enough. Fine-villas as it was known in the language of the British Army then. There was the little farm just off the main road which had been the headquarters of my Company, and there was the side road leading to what had been Battalion Headquarters.

Some five or six miles before we reached Arras we pulled up to investigate what had been a nasty accident. A French despatch rider, very badly injured and bleeding a great deal, was lying almost in the centre of the road within a few yards of the twisted remains of a motor cycle. We could do nothing to help the poor fellow who was terribly mutilated—one leg being doubled back beneath his mangled



A HARE FOR THE HOME GUARD



BACK IN LONDON AFTER THE TORPEDOING

WE JOIN THE B.E.F.

body. I tried to arrange him more comfortably, but the moment I attempted, with the utmost gentleness, to move him, he looked up at me with his one eye from a face otherwise smothered with congealed blood, with such an expression of helpless appeal that I forebore to do anything further. Obviously, it was a desperate case, and leaving one of our party to keep watch, we raced on to Arras where we located a doctor who immediately set off to attend to the wounded man. I mention this incident since, in the ensuing days, I heard so many stories of despatch riders who had mysteriously come to grief. In particular, a certain D. R.—held in much esteem by his Commanding Officer—assured me that these stories were not just silly fairy tales. "You can take it from me, Sir," he said, "it is a fact that D. R.'s are being 'bumped off' in one way or another, every day."

How the incident recorded above could have occurred I, of course, do not know, but it was certainly strange that a motor cyclist on a wide open road should have met with such a shocking accident. At the time it never occurred to me that the inexplicable disaster might have been due to the activities of a saboteur, and I never looked for any clue. And I do not know whether the unfortunate man survived to tell the tale.

At ENSA headquarters in Arras I learned that I, together with other entertainers, members of concert parties and lecturers, was to be billeted at the Hotel Univers, a most attractive place where I was allotted a charming room looking onto a flowering horse chestnut tree in which a pair of goldfinches were nesting. Two exceedingly congenial co-lecturers—Commander Blair, who was giving talks on the Islands of the South Seas, and Edward Broadhead, who discussed Dickens' works and who gave impersonations of the various characters—were already at the hotel, and we at once struck up a firm friendship.

Ramshaw, always my primary consideration, spent the first night in a little room at ENSA headquarters, although I was not entirely satisfied with the arrangement. I prefer

ALL BRITISH EAGLE

to have him somewhere close at hand—after all, one never knows who might interfere with him—and decided to try to find some place at the hotel where he could be fixed up in future.

On the following morning, Blair and Broadhead joined me in the search for suitable quarters. We investigated a large cellar, a disused attic, a store-room, but none was suitable. For a time we were at a loss to know where on earth he could be put. In the end, as has so frequently happened, we found just the right place—a little room on the ground floor just to the left of the archway by which you enter the main courtyard. We all three set to work to clear out the rubbish with which it was half filled and finally made the place habitable. The view from the window of this room, looking out onto the courtyard with the chestnut-trees at the far end, was really quite attractive.

Having decided that it wasn't worth while asking for transport to convey Ramshaw such a short distance, we, Blair, Broadhead and I set out to bring him back on my arm. We realized, of course, that the sight of an eagle would probably excite a good deal of interest, but judged that, if we were not delayed, we ought to be back at the hotel in a few minutes.

We little thought that we should be followed on the homeward journey by a crowd of excited people, shouting and gesticulating at the sight of such a strange visitor to their city. It was really quite embarrassing. We must have looked like the old-time circus procession, with little boys and dogs running in front and on each side of us. As we crossed the "Place" the crowd grew to an enormous size. Some of the women fired questions at me :

"Qu'est ce que vous avez la?" "Pour attaquer les Bosches?" and other queries I couldn't understand. I tried to make them understand in my best, though extremely inadequate French, that he was with me to help entertain the soldiers. "Ah!! Pour aider les Soldats!!! Oy! Oy! Oy-ee!" Evidently they thought he was some sort of a new secret weapon destined to strike terror into

WE JOIN THE B.E.F.

the hearts of the enemy. As we got to the hotel a priest and a couple of poilus had joined the growing throng, and I was unbelievably relieved—we were all three unbelievably relieved—to gain the privacy of the lounge, where I, for one, indulged in a much needed pick-me-up.

A few days later our work began. Transport called at the hotel every evening to take Ramshaw and me to the unit for which we were to perform, and I must say that we had extraordinarily enthusiastic audiences. Conditions under which we worked varied considerably. Sometimes we appeared in a hall where facilities for showing the films were available. Sometimes in a hut or outbuilding where only slides could be shown and sometimes I did a talk without any illustrations at all. In any case Ramshaw invariably ensured the success of the evening by his aerobatics over the heads of the audience.

What jolly evenings we had at the Univers after our shows. Having seen that Ramshaw was comfortably housed for the night I would generally find Blair or Broadhead, or both, in the hotel and sit down to a dinner which included such delicacies as Wiener Schnitzel, excellently cooked trout, and most palatable—if somewhat sweet—champagne.

The days, too, were very pleasant. During the morning I would take Ramshaw out into the courtyard for an airing. He seemed to enjoy this part of the programme, spreading his wings in the sunlight, going through his wing-flapping exercises, showing-off to the little groups of people who gathered round to watch him and sometimes taking a bath in the bowl of water that we had provided.

It was all very different to a tour at home or in the United States. Here it wasn't necessary to pack and unpack suit cases every day; there were no taxis to worry about; there was no need to put Ramshaw into a crate and there was no waiting on draughty railway stations for overdue trains.

So the time passed: Ramshaw's airing in the morning; shopping or sight-seeing in the afternoon, and a show for some unit in the early part of the evening. Then dinner at

ALL BRITISH EAGLE

the Univers afterwards with Blair and any friends that we might chance to run across. And strangely enough, we met quite a few.

All this time I was, of course, much looking forward to the day when I should visit the old firing line of 1916-1917—a wish that was to be fulfilled under most fortunate conditions.

It transpired that Ramshaw and I were to put on our show for a unit that was stationed somewhere between Albert and Amiens, and that a Royal Air Force padre was to drive us to the place and to bring us back to Arras after the show. By great good fortune it happened that this padre called at the hotel some hours before we were scheduled to leave and he sportingly agreed that we should make an early start so that there would be time for us to go by way of some of the old battle-fields that I had known. We followed a somewhat round-about route; through Bapaume, Irles, Miraumont, Grandcourt, Courcellette, and so to Albert and along the Amiens road. Needless to say, I was on the look-out for old landmarks which began to appear after we left Bapaume. And what memories they revived! Irles; the chalk-cliff, close to Miraumont Goods Station, once honeycombed with German dug-outs; Miraumont Village; Loupart Wood; and the River Ancre. As we neared what I knew must be Grandcourt we drove over a little bridge across the river at just about the spot where the left of my Company had kept touch with the 1st Battalion of the H.A.C. on the opposite bank.

"I think, if you turn to the right," I remarked to the padre, "we shall be at the edge of Grandcourt. That is, if its built up where it used to be." We turned as I had suggested, and there, ahead of us, lay the village.

"Go easy. I believe you'll find there's a lane running to the left just along here which leads to a little chalk-pit where I had my headquarters."

I experienced a quite astonishing feeling of excitement in finding myself back in the old country of unrest.

"The chalk-pit should be about fifty yards ahead, on

WE JOIN THE B.E.F.

the left," I went on—sub-consciously pleased with myself for remembering the place so well. And, yes, there it was. Changed a good deal, of course, but the same chalk-pit. Instead of the frame entrance to the German dug-out in which we lived and the mud with bits of equipment and German "pine-apples" littered about, there stood a neat, red-painted building, rather suggestive of a village hall, with a narrow gravel path bordered with brightly coloured flowers, leading to it. The sun was shining and some children were laughing and playing in the lane. My thoughts flashed back to this same spot 24 years ago. I could remember it all so clearly. The darkness, the evil-smelling mud, the greasy duck-boards, the scent of H.E., the water-filled shell holes, the roar of gun-fire.

"What are you looking at?" enquired the padre.

"Well, this is the old spot right enough."

"Changed a bit, I suppose," he continued.

"Yes, it's very different. I spent quite a lot of time in a dug-out here, and saw quite a bit of activity round about. Good Lord, I remember a morning when I was creeping about in a little orchard just over the top there, I saw a Jerry disappear into a sort of strong-point at the other end of it. I came back to the dug-out here, which was my Company headquarters, and asked if any of the lads would come with me on a little unofficial raid. Every one of the men on the spot volunteered to take part, and the result of it was that we brought back a prisoner. A small frightened man he was, wearing an enormous overcoat and he seemed eager to show some newspaper cuttings he had in his pocket. It seems that the Germans had been told that the brutal British killed all their prisoners, and I imagine he wanted to supply some information as a sort of peace offering. When one of my fellows offered him a drink of water, a look of utter incredulity came into his eyes. Then someone offered him a cigarette which he also refused. But he plucked up enough courage to pull out of his pocket a wallet containing a photograph of a woman and two children.

ALL BRITISH EAGLE

"Mein Frau und kinder," he explained shakily and ventured to glance round to observe the re-action of his audience. He must have been considerably relieved when hands were raised, with a number of fingers held up, "Me four," "Me five," "Me seven," came quite a chorus from the sympathetic onlookers. I remember that when I had handed him over to Battalion headquarters I smiled at him and said, "Auf wiedersehen!" quite expecting that he would spring to attention and salute me smartly. Nothing like that happened. He continued to gaze past me with his dull eyes, and I can only suppose that either he couldn't understand my German or that he thought I meant to intimate that we should one day meet in the land to which he was to be sent so prematurely."

The padre listened very kindly to my story but was not really, I think, very much amused. On we went, towards Courcellette. What a transformation! No foul mud; no rat-infested trenches; no artillery fire. Where we had followed a moving barrage a great expanse of growing corn stretched to the horizon. Roots of great trees which had been shattered twenty-four years before had sprouted afresh, the new growths reaching a height of thirty feet or more and casting soft shadows on the fragrant earth. Where the mutilated bodies of dead soldiers had lain half buried in the mud were tiny flowers and green vegetation. Clumps of bushes and brambles, struggling towards the sky, marked the places where dug-outs had fallen in.

Such changes made identification of any particular spot extremely difficult—often impossible. However, one could pretty well judge just about where one was standing and the direction and distance of the old landmarks. Shortly before reaching the Bapaume-Albert road we passed a sign-post with an arrow indicating that, 100 yards or so to the south, lay Regina Trench, taken by the Canadians in 1916, and kept as a memorial. We had gone "over the top" from Regina Trench twenty-four years before.

Our show that evening went without a hitch, and the padre, having got Ramshaw and me back to Arras in good

WE JOIN THE B.E.F.

time for dinner, stayed to spend the evening with our little crowd.

Since our arrival Ramshaw had been so much talked about that I imagined that everybody in the hotel must have known about him. Yet, on the following afternoon an incident occurred which proved that I had over-estimated his fame. I was waiting in the hotel writing-room for transport to pick us up. Ramshaw, hooded, was on the arm of a chair while I wrote a letter. Whilst he is hooded, Ramshaw, generally speaking, remains quite still, and, as I sat scribbling away at my letter I had temporarily forgotten him. Presently some young ladies—members of a concert party, I believe—came in. One of them, seeing Ramshaw sitting there, pulled up short and exclaimed, "Oh, LOOK ! How perfectly MARVELLOUS !"

Others joined in : " Good heavens, *whatever* is it ? "

Then one of them, puzzled perhaps by Ramshaw's immobility, stepped forward, eyed him closely for a time and remarked : " It's stuffed."

" Of course," chimed in another. " How foolish of me ! "

" I QUITE thought it was alive," another joyfully exclaimed as though much relieved.

" Well, girls, let's get on with the business," broke in another who seemed rather annoyed at the interruption.

They seated themselves round a table and were soon deep in whatever they were discussing. All except one who—I couldn't help seeing—kept an eye on Ramshaw. Her expression became more and more mystified as from time to time he moved his head ever so slightly. I could see that she was doubting her own eyes, and when Ramshaw turned his head obviously to one side, she almost shouted : " That bird *moved* ! "

At this all the others turned and gazed incredulously at Ramshaw, whilst I, meaning to put their doubts at rest, softly uttered the shrill whistle that Ramshaw knows so well. In a flash his head swung round in my direction. " My GOD it *IS* alive," someone shouted and without further

ALL BRITISH EAGLE

ado they sprang up from their chairs and dashed out of the room.

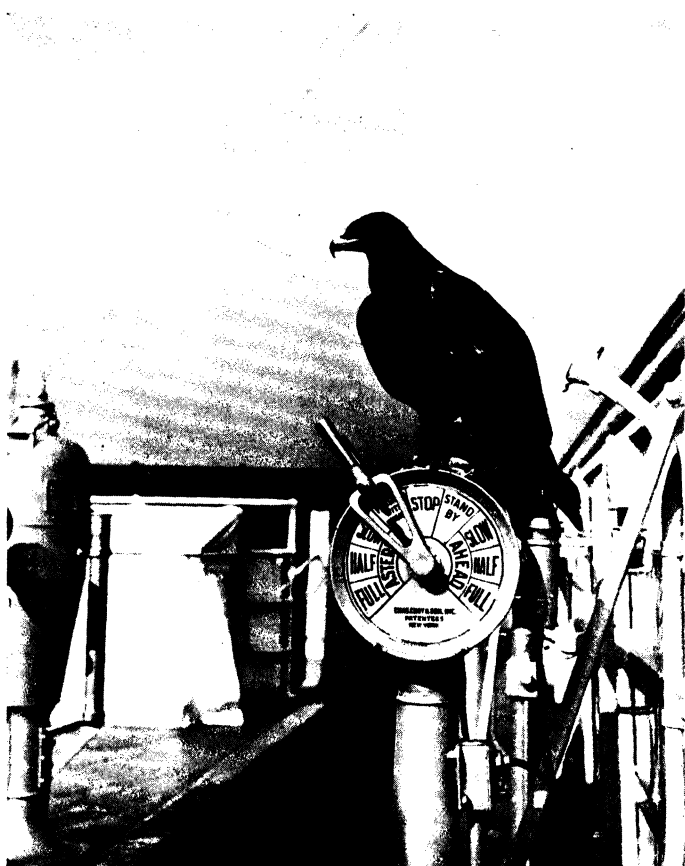
So the days and nights passed ; Ramshaw enjoying his daily sunning in the shade of the flowering chestnuts, I visiting ENSA and calling at the Cheval Boucherie for Ramshaw's meat, and the two of us doing our shows in the evenings. One day Blair and I made a pilgrimage to Vimy Ridge with its superb Memorial to the Canadians and French who fell there.

On the evening of May 8th, after doing a show for a famous infantry regiment I arrived back at the hotel to find that Blair had met some officer friends of his, and had invited them to dinner. I was asked to join the party. Later we repaired to my room, which was more spacious than the others, and as we sat there talking and smoking it occurred to me that our guests might like a little entertainment. So I turned to Broadhead, whom I had never seen on the stage, and said : " I say, old boy, how about one of your impersonations ? Micawber or Uriah Heap or some one ? "

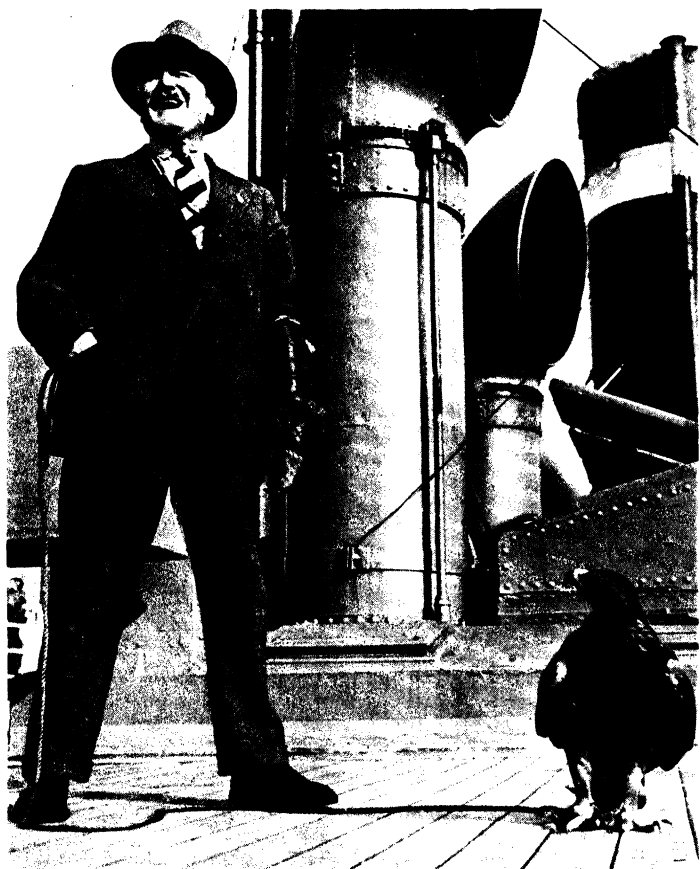
The rest of the party greeted my suggestion with loud acclamation, but I hardly dared hope that Broadhead, an exceedingly retiring, sensitive, modest sort of fellow, would feel like obliging, for the party had " warmed up " quite considerably by this time, and Broadhead, incidentally, happens to be a tee-totaller.

However, he got up resignedly and left the room. Within an incredibly short time he returned—a perfect re-incarnation of Grandfather Smallweed from Bleak House. Blair stepped forward and helped the tottering old man into a chair. Then the hubbub subsided. The audience remained absolutely silent as Broadhead did his act. It was really first-rate, everyone was delighted and he received much applause when he'd finished. I congratulated myself on having asked him to do it, and I congratulated him on carrying on so superbly under such adverse conditions.

I was rather shaken though when Broadhead, seizing the opportunity of " getting his own back," as it were, said to me :



MR. RAMSHAW HOPES HE IS "THROUGH WITH ENGINES"



" WELL, WHAT'S THE JOKE ? "

WE JOIN THE B.E.F.

"Well, I've done my turn. How about you doing something? Why not bring old Ramshaw up?"

"Oh, no. It's awfully late, and you don't want to see *him*," I remonstrated.

"Don't we, by jove," cut in one of the officers. "But you don't suggest that you could bring him up *here*."

I was going to explain that it would be most unwise to do any such thing; for, to tell the truth, I wasn't at all keen on going out into the darkness to fetch him, when Broadhead exclaimed, "Of course he can bring him up. He's often been in bedrooms before."

"But won't he be rattled by the bright light?" enquired the same interested officer. "I can't imagine an eagle putting up with this sort of thing."

I could see that there was nothing for it but to bring Ramshaw along, and, remarking that they would be able to judge for themselves, I went downstairs to collect him.

On our return Ramshaw, quite undisturbed by the bright light into which he was so suddenly brought, behaved himself with his usual equanimity. He spread his wings on the word of command, flew to the hands of some of the more venturesome guests, stood to attention, and made himself generally agreeable.

Altogether, we spent a very happy, carefree evening. Why not? The phoney war was still dragging on, there was very little doing and—as the French people so frequently reminded us: "We had the Maginot Line!"

Next day, May 9th, I discovered, rather to my surprise, that I had no show to do that evening. My surprise was increased when, meeting Blair later in the day, I learned that he, too, had not been detailed to perform, and when Broadhead told us that he, likewise, had been given the evening off, we were really mystified. Curious!

Blair and I, for want of something better to do, wandered round to the Arras Casino to see what film was being shown. Whatever it was we decided it wasn't worth seeing, but that we would come back on the following day, May 10th—if our duties permitted—for we were presented with a hand-

ALL BRITISH EAGLE

bill concerning the forthcoming attraction : "Chantons quand même," which, as the accompanying reproduction of the hand-bill may suggest, promised to be tremendously inspiring.

As may have been prophesied by the war student we were destined not to see the film.

We turned in early that night. Just before dawn I was awakened by the wailing of air-raid sirens. I turned over to continue my slumbers more comfortably but found myself wondering if the sound of an approaching plane that I could hear could be that of an enemy machine. It seemed to pass pretty much overhead, trailed off into the distance and returned again to closer quarters. Then an A.A. gun opened up with a hollow-sounding "Pang-Pang." Not particularly formidable, I thought.

Opening one eye I could see that dawn had just broken. It rather reminded me of the last war : "Standing-to at dawn"—and guns firing ! Oh, well, there was no need to stand-to now. And the bed was snug and warm.

Suddenly a series of violent explosions rent the air. Broomph—Broomph—Brrroomp : Whee-ee-ew CRASH. One, closer than the rest shook the hotel so violently that, for a moment, I thought the place would collapse. Later that morning I heard that it was the aerodrome just outside Arras that had been the objective. I also heard, as all the world now knows, that at dawn on that morning of May 10th, 1940, the enemy commenced his invasion of the low countries. As for us entertainers—we were ordered to pack our belongings and to be ready to move at a moment's notice. We received the notice that evening and drove through the night to Le Havre. What a charming place it seemed when, after déjeuner next morning Blair and I walked to the top of the hill and looked back onto as peaceful a scene as one can well imagine : red-tiled cottages nestling against the hill ; the bright greenness of early summer everywhere ; apple trees ablaze with masses of pink blossom and below the blue unruffled sea.

A day or so later we received orders to embark. The

WE JOIN THE B.E.F.

scene as we left France remains indelibly impressed on my mind. Just before we moved off a number of British soldiers—R.A.S.C., I imagine—collected along the jetty above us to wish us good luck on our journey and jokingly to ask us to deliver messages to people and places at home.

"Tell my old woman I shall be home soon."

"Give my love to Southampton if you get there."

"See you at the Old Bull and Bush."

One, pointing at Ramshaw, called "How about the turkey for Christmas? We'll be there!" 'A remark that caused roars of laughter.

Encouraged, perhaps, by such congeniality, an attractive little girl—one of a concert party—began to sing a song about "Somewhere over a Rainbow," which had such a profound effect on the boisterous gathering that there was quite suddenly a weird silence. As more soldiers joined the audience, they approached almost on tip-toe to stand, like the others, silent—unmoving.

As the girl sang, another member of the party hurriedly opened a violin-case, snatched a violin out of it, and, without waiting to tune up, proceeded to accompany her. A few moments later someone else appeared with an accordion and also joined in. The whole thing was absolutely spontaneous and intensely moving; the earnestness of the small singer; the lovely quality of her voice; the rapt attention of the men. I did not realise at first that we were adrift—gliding smoothly towards the open sea; leaving the statuesque crowd of workers further and further behind us. As the last notes of the song died away the audience, transfixed until then, broke into a roar of applause that came to us, as from far away, over the still water. Now the figures of the men became indistinct. The jetty merged into the town and the hills beyond. Even the coast-line became blurred and was eventually lost in the hazy distance.

So we said good-bye to France.

The phoney war was ended—the real war had begun.

ALL BRITISH EAGLE

CHAPTER XII

WITH THE HOME GUARD

RECENTLY some of us have heard, perhaps over the radio, a song, the words of which go something like this :

“ Someone’s rocking my dream-boat,
Someone’s invaded my dreams,
We were sailing along, peaceful and calm,
Suddenly something went wrong ”

and each time that I have heard it I have been reminded of our hurried departure from the loveliness of Arras. Someone had certainly rocked our dream-boat with a vengeance.

On our arrival home we learned that the situation on the Continent was developing badly for us. The world knows what followed. Arras fell, then Albert, Amiens, Abbeville. The denouement came at Dunkirk. Last night I was talking to a man who was there, waiting on the sands, with those thousands of others, for some sort of transport—transport which, it seemed, would never materialise—to take them across the Channel. He said that as they stood there, hoping and waiting, a deeply impressive incident occurred. A group of Welsh soldiers with that wonderful aptitude the Welsh people have for singing, started “ Land of Hope and Glory.” Presently the men standing near-by joined in. Soon the refrain was taken up by more and more waiting men until literally thousands were singing. When the Welshmen, and those standing reasonably near them, had sung the final line, “ Make thee mightier yet,” and their last notes were dying away, a repetition of the last words came rolling back, like a great echo, from men hundreds of yards away, “ Make thee mightier yet ! ”

And then the incredible thing had happened.

At that time the outlook for Britain was far from favourable. Something had got to be done. The threat of invasion loomed large. The local Parashots—later the



" CAN I HAVE HIS AUTOGRAPH ? "



RAMSHAW'S PENT-HOUSE ON THE ROOF OF THE GOTHAM
(Specially decorated for photograph.)

WITH THE HOME GUARD

Local Defence Volunteers—were formed, and I was asked to take charge of our neighbourhood's detachment. This involved the work of enrolling men who—in spite of their business obligations—were prepared to play their part in case of an invasion. Men who were to be ready to proceed to pre-arranged points, to destroy parachutists or to deny roads to enemy transport.

The organising of such a detachment of the L.D.V. was considerable—was, indeed, almost a whole-time job. Shot-guns and .22 rifles had to be collected from anyone who happened to possess such articles and right royally did we parade with these somewhat inadequate arms. Twice a week we mounted a guard at Chipstead School ; the sentries being placed on the railway bridge on the Chipstead-Chevening road, about 300 yards away. The keenness of the members was admirable. How often, in those curiously unreal days have I gone round to see how the guard was faring, to find some ex-soldier demonstrating to the newly-enrolled the manner in which a rifle is sloped ; the correct position of the “ present ” or explaining the parts of a rifle. How keenly the recruits responded ! Every man eager to master the technique and to put up with the discomfort of rolling up in a blanket and sleeping—or trying to sleep—on a mattress that had been borrowed from somewhere, and on the following day to get on with his normal job.

The consequence of all this was that Ramshaw was deprived of much of his usual activity. At odd times he enjoyed periods of liberty, and on certain afternoons, when L.D.V. duties permitted, was taken out to try his luck at a rabbit or a hare. If he succeeded in getting one, or more, he was only allowed to partake of the less succulent portions, the more appetising joints, except in the case of elderly victims, being reserved for the larder.

He must have appreciated these outings, especially as he spent so much time in watching us parading in the park or constructing the rifle range in the Salters Heath sand-pit. We Local Defence Volunteers, nevertheless, got a lot of fun out of firing on the latter, particularly those of us who

ALL BRITISH EAGLE

rather fancied ourselves as being pretty useful with a rifle. On one occasion one of my nephews—Robert Blockey—then a pilot officer in the R.A.F., came down to see me and accompanied us to the range. He offered to take on anyone in the detachment for a prize of 5/-. Ex-Sergeant Plum was chosen to represent us and the competition began : “ Bessels Green L.D.V. versus the R.A.F.” Intense excitement prevailed. Each competitor was allowed to fire five rounds (we were using .303 ammunition on that occasion) and for once the R.A.F. was beaten by the very narrowest of margins !

Then Esmond came down and created a diversion by cutting out of cardboard a life-sized German, which was erected on the range as an especial target.

The anxiety of each man to be the one to put the most holes through it at a range of 200 yards was terrific. This competition was won by ex-Corporal Carey, late of The Queen's Own, Royal West Kent, Regiment.

Enthusiasm for correct deportment and for march-discipline was equally commendable. As we marched along one day we heard an onlooker say : “ Coo, they look just like soldiers ! ”

Yet it seemed that some of us fell a little short of the general standard. One member, for instance, found it quite impossible to keep in step while we were on the march. And he tried so hard.

“ Left . . . left . . . left, right, left,” I would sing out encouragingly. Still, this one member would remain on the wrong foot.

“ Marlow ! ” I would shout, trying to adopt the tone of a drill sergeant, “ You're on the wrong foot. Cha-a-a-ange step.” At this he would shuffle his feet about as we proceeded and would finish up still out of step.

“ MARLOW ! ” (This was not really his name, but I use it to save him from possible embarrassment.) CHA-A-A-ANGE . . . STEP ! ” Again he would shuffle his feet with the same discouraging result, and I would try to sound like a real, stern Sergeant Major :

WITH THE HOME GUARD

"Alright! Bessels Green Platoon! Everyone with the exception of Marlow, *CHA-A-A-ANGE STEP!*" The whole platoon, including Marlow, completed the movement like one man—and Marlow was still out of step.

But to return to Ramshaw. As I have mentioned there were odd periods when he could be taken out for a constitutional, generally in the park where he could easily find a large-limbed tree on which to pitch whilst I trampled about in the nettles or bracken below in the hope of disturbing a rabbit. Ramshaw, of course, knew the game thoroughly, keeping a keen look-out and following me from one likely-looking spot to another so as to be in the best position if anything should get up.

But whether at liberty or tied up at home Ramshaw, by his intelligence and faultless behaviour, invariably makes a most favourable impression on any visitors. He was quite a feature of our unit of the Home Guard, and although most of the members had heard of him and some had seen him perched on the back of the car as we drove out into the country, few of them had ever actually met him. Often, after a parade, quite a crowd would gather round him and most flattering remarks concerning his demeanour or appearance would be made. I remember one comment which—although it was intended to be complimentary—was little less than an insult: "He'd make a good mascot for us if only the Jerries hadn't already chosen the eagle."

Thus June, July and the first ten days of August passed with only occasional visits by solitary enemy planes to remind us dwellers in peaceful Kent that there was still a war on.

What with L.D.V. (now Home Guard) duties and the daily exercising of Ramshaw, I was kept pretty busy but had yet another job to finish. Between whiles I had been putting together and taking new sequences for a new film, "Britain carries on," which I was to take to America at the end of the year.

Among other sequences I needed some which would show Ramshaw carrying-on in spite of the war, and arrangements for photography were always carefully made in

ALL BRITISH EAGLE

advance. Yet things did not always proceed according to plan, as the following may suggest.

We had arranged to try for the pictures on a day towards the end of July and had collected several movie-cameras—together with the necessary number of people to work them—for the occasion. Quite a little crowd of old friends had managed to congregate: Eileen and Leslie Hoyle; Esmond; Jean; Philip and myself. Each one was eager to help to obtain the required shots which were to include some of Ramshaw doing a doubly good job of work: ridding the country of a pest, and, at the same time, providing the main wherewithal for some rabbit pies.

We were to visit a piece of ground where rabbits abounded and from which there is a magnificent view—which latter consideration might well add to the pictorial value of any pictures we might secure.

Everything promised extraordinarily well. We had the right people to help; a quite unusual number of cameras—all loaded and ready for action—a superb piece of country over which Ramshaw was to fly, and perfect weather, which looked like continuing. In addition, Ramshaw was in keen flying order, i.e., was in that desirable state of readiness to attack anything that is known among falconers as being "in yarak."

Unfortunately, on the very day preceding that on which we were to try for results, Ramshaw broke his chain and was loose again. He did not make off, however, but DID finish up the remains of a rabbit which he discovered in the wooden safe in which such items are generally kept. The door had been insecurely fastened. This meant that he had had a good square meal on the very day before that on which we were to try for the long-delayed pictures—and any falconer will know what THAT means.

Gravely we discussed the wisdom of taking him out under such conditions. He wouldn't be really hungry for several days. He might be keen enough to try for any rabbits we chanced to put up; but not be sufficiently interested to return to a lure. On the other hand we

WITH THE HOME GUARD

simply could not let this grand opportunity pass. We ought to try to get SOME results ; we couldn't throw up the sponge so easily at this stage. After all, he hadn't had a real gorge and at least we might get some worth-while pictures and we shouldn't LOSE him. Thus, the wish being father to the thought, we argued against our better judgment.

On the following morning, having made sure that Ramshaw had at least cast, we piled into the car : Ramshaw, Eileen, Jean, Leslie, Esmond, Philip and myself, plus cameras, lures, and falconers' bags. It was a perfect day : a blue sky with a slight haze at first and a few very high clouds. The country on which we were to fly was the southern slope of the North Downs overlooking Westerham and Oxted, and on reaching it the cameramen took up their positions as arranged, and Ramshaw was cast off. For some time things ran smoothly enough, and we even succeeded in getting a sequence of Ramshaw catching a rabbit. After that his interest began to wane. He sat in an inaccessible tree, nonchalantly looking at the view and completely ignoring my attempts to lure him down with a most attractive rabbit's head. One of us happened to put up another rabbit at which he deigned to start, but it jinked at the moment when he grabbed at it and he couldn't be bothered to pursue it any further. He seemed to be really annoyed about it, to consider it the last straw. Perhaps he was tired of cameras, of repeating sequences—and of us ! In any case he turned his back on me, spread his wings, and rose on the breeze, higher and higher into the sky.

"Now what?" Leslie shouted as he tried to stuff his portable camera back into its case.

"You spread out along the side of the hill, I'll get up to the top. Let me know if you see him pitch," I answered. By this time Ramshaw was some half-a-mile away and finally disappeared over a wood near the top of the downs. Off we rushed. It was rough going, but I stumbled on towards the wood—clambering over gates ; blundering

ALL BRITISH EAGLE

over ploughed land, my eyes fixed on the sky ahead of me all the while.

As I emerged from a rough brambly piece of ground into an open field I came upon a Home Guard unit which had been carrying out a field exercise. At first they took me to be one of the "enemy" but I soon dispelled that idea by asking them whether they had seen anything of an eagle. They then, naturally enough, took me to be an escaped lunatic. "An eagle! We've seen some pee-wits and a couple of partridges but no eagles lately," one of them chaffingly replied, much to the amusement of the rest.

"I am looking for a trained eagle," I explained. "We were flying it at rabbits and its made off. If you see it don't hurt it. Just let out a good yell and I'll come back."

"We've just put up a hare," came their parting rejoinder. "Perhaps it'll nab that. You might give it to us if it does. It would just do for Sunday's dinner." More loud laughter greeted this witticism.

"If he catches a hare you shall have it," I replied, knowing that, in all probability he would not succeed in catching one. If he did and I could only locate him I should be so relieved that I would willingly dispose of it.

Soon afterwards I ran into Leslie and some of the others. "Any sign of him?"

"Not a thing. Heaven knows where he's gone to or what he's got hold of."

For a few moments we stood, silently regarding the view, pondering the situation and sub-consciously listening for Ramshaw's bell.

Suddenly Jean gave vent to a shrill, staccato "There he is!" And there, sure enough, he was. Sailing along at no great height above the sloping side of the downs, over a piece of country that I had just traversed! Then a great shout went up. The Home Guard had seen him! Their shout seemed like a signal, for hardly had its echoes died away than Ramshaw, as though obeying a command, keeled over, swung down in a determined stoop and crashed

THE BATTLE OF BRITAIN

among some heaps of cut grass. For a few seconds his wings threshed about. Then he became still. We couldn't see exactly what had happened but we knew he had got hold of SOMETHING. Along the side of the downs we raced to find, when we reached him, that he was holding the very thing that the Home Guard had scoffingly asked for—a hare! The scoffers also gathered round to inspect the kill but their tone had changed to one of intense admiration.

"With his speed and strength he ought to be able to tackle almost anything," remarked an elderly member in an awe-stricken voice.

"Yes," added a more youthful member.

"That's right," agreed a lanky youth, and then added, "I wonder they don't train him to go up and have a crack at the Jerry planes."

The hare, whose head had been devoured by Ramshaw, was then handed over to its claimant and we set out for home. Photographically, we had not done very well, but we had, at least, got Ramshaw safely back, and, in the meantime, he had established a reputation with another unit of the Home Guard.

CHAPTER XIII

THE BATTLE OF BRITAIN

TOWARDS the end of July, 1940, I ceased to be a member of the Home Guard. I expected to leave for the United States towards the end of September as my New York manager was anxious that I should get over there in good time for the winter season. Hitherto, I had sailed at the end of December or the beginning of January, and on my arrival usually had only two or three days to spare before the first "date."

Now things were different. Organisations that would have been ready to engage us, had we been in the country, were sceptical as to whether we should arrive at all and didn't

ALL BRITISH EAGLE

feel like booking an attraction that might never materialise. So it was arranged that we should leave in the early autumn. There was much to be done before the new film I was to take would be completed, and I realised that—free of Home Guard duties as I should be—I should have to devote a great deal of time to the job of finishing it.

But it was at this time that things which tended to dispel thoughts of photography from one's mind began to happen. The enemy had commenced to launch furious bombing attacks on our Island : attacks which were at first directed at aerodromes, but which led to the terrific assaults on London. Living on the edge of the blitz—as it were—those of us, including Ramshaw, who didn't seek refuge in a shelter were destined to see a good deal of it all.

Nothing happened in a really big way until the beginning of August. Leslie, who had left Bessels Green, came to stay with us for the week-end. I remember that, as we sat talking on that Saturday evening, we wondered if we should see any activity on the following day.

"Well, there's one thing," Leslie remarked hopefully, "if Jerry DOES come over, we ought to be in the right place to see the fun." He did, and we were.

It was just before midday on that peaceful Sunday morning that the screaming of sirens disturbed the serenity of the countryside. Soon afterwards we could hear the muffled roar of approaching planes, high up in the cloudless, hazy sky. As they drew nearer the whole atmosphere, the very house itself, seemed to be vibrating, trembling under the disturbance caused by the throbbing of countless engines. Then we could see them—or some of them—right overhead and in unbelievable numbers : indistinctly, it is true, but there they were. With the help of binoculars I could see them much more plainly : the bombers, in formations of three, with swarms of fighters wheeling above them.

Aeroplanes to the north, aeroplanes to the east ; to the west ; to the south ; all at an enormous height and mixed up with both vapour trails and R.A.F. machines. Oh, for the eyes of an eagle ! Had I been so fortunate as to possess

THE BATTLE OF BRITAIN

such piercing sight I should have discarded the glasses and yet been able to discriminate between friend and foe. As it was, all we could see were innumerable planes speckling the sky. Suddenly there came the sound of machine-gun fire from somewhere up in the blue and we all scrambled up to the top room of the house to command a better view.

Some of us, including myself, rushed across to the window facing north, from which there is a fine view across to the North Downs. The sky was still dotted with planes and streaked with vapour trails but there seemed to be no "dog-fights" going on. Then Leslie, who was looking out of a window at the other end of the room, roared out : "Quickly ! Here's a fight. There's a machine coming down !" We all dashed across the room in time to see a big plane, obviously a bomber, plunging earthwards with a smaller machine close behind it. When quite close to the tree-tops the leading craft flattened out and then commenced to climb. The smaller one repeated the manoeuvre, but, pulling out sooner and taking a short cut, closed with the adversary. Now the two seemed merged into one. Then they parted. For a second the large machine seemed to hang suspended. Then it began to spin downwards, finally to disappear behind the hill.

A moment later a great spout of black smoke and crimson flame shot into the air from where it had fallen. Then came the roar of an explosion.

Was it a Jerry ?

Ramshaw, from his vantage point in the park, could have told us before we started that the large machine bore the swastika of the Luftwaffe, the smaller one the "target" of the R.A.F.

But we didn't know. We clattered downstairs ; got out the car in record time, scrambled on board and drove off pell-mell for the scene of battle, confident that we had been the only people to see the fight and we should be the first to arrive on the scene.

Judge of our astonishment when, on our arrival at the spot we found that some thirty or forty others had fore-

ALL BRITISH EAGLE

stalled us. There was Major Birchenough of the Special Police, and Charles Wisdom inspecting the still burning parts of the Dornier. Several of the Home Guard were there too: Fawkes and Thomas, and Kay and Drury. And what a congenial gathering it was! "Hullo, Drury, what do you make of it?"

"Dornier bomber, Sir. Exploded when it hit the ground. Bounced off the side of the hill. No Jerries alive. Remains of some of 'em down there if you'd like to see fer yerself."

As we stood there looking at the still burning bits of the plane littering the hillside, we noticed, a little apart from the rest of the sight-seers, a woman addressing a group of eager listeners. She was obviously a good deal excited, waving her arms about and talking in a loud, rather shrill voice. It seemed to us very strange that anyone should have chosen such a spot at such a time to address a meeting and we casually drew nearer to hear something of what she was saying. A man with a child holding each of his hands was standing just behind her. Every now and then he would attempt to put in a word but without success. The speaker seemed to be so proud of what she had to tell that she couldn't allow anyone else to share in the telling. As we got closer we could see that her face was pretty severely scratched and that the scratches were still bleeding. Had she been fighting?

When she saw us approaching she raised her voice a little and looked towards us as though anxious that we shouldn't miss anything of what she was saying. Then, having got to the end of her story she started all over again. I am very glad she did so as I was thus able to hear it from the beginning.

It seems that the family had come down from London for a day in the country and had brought with them a kettle, some tea, bread and butter, cake, and the rest of the usual picnic accessories. They had chosen this particular spot because it looked out over some of the most beautiful scenery in Kent. And it was so quiet, so peaceful. Such a change from London, with its shrieking air-raid sirens,

THE BATTLE OF BRITAIN

noisy A.A. guns and anti-fire services. Lately it had become almost insufferable. She said that as they were enjoying themselves, each in his own way : looking at the view, watching the rabbits in the valley, listening to the hum of insects, their day dreams were rudely disturbed by the blaring of distant sirens, to be quickly followed by the thunder of hordes of approaching planes. Then the fight had commenced almost directly above them. What an uproar ! When machine-gun bullets began to spatter the ground round them they felt it was about time to get under cover. But where ? There were no shelters, no cellars, no houses—nothing except the church, and that was several hundred yards away.

Before they had made up their minds what to do there came the screaming of engines at much closer quarters : bursts of machine-gun and cannon-fire and the great bomber came roaring down towards them. Where could they go for safety ? Nowhere. Yes, a bramble patch ! “ Under those bushes ! ” she had yelled to the family. And into the bushes the family had dived, regardless of thorns and torn clothes and faces, just as the great bomber, missing the church steeple by inches, took the top off the oak tree above them, hit the ground some 25 yards away, bounced off, crashed again lower down the hill and went up with that terrifying explosion. “ A nice finish to our day in the peaceful country,” she concluded, and then added “ And just look at my face ! ”

One feels that the brambles could hardly have been of much protective value in such a situation, but they did, at least, permit the visitors to obey that instinct which prompts us when thus threatened, to get under some sort of cover—regardless as to whether it is adequate or not.

I remember, for instance, the night when Esmond and I, standing in the garden watching a raid on London, heard a bomb screaming down towards, it seemed, the very spot on which we were standing. We instinctively crouched down by a rockery which would have afforded little enough protection if the bomb had fallen as we thought it would.

ALL BRITISH EAGLE

Actually, it swished by and landed in the park—quite 100 yards away and no damage was done. It was very much nearer to Ramshaw than it was to us, and we collected a torch and went out to see if he were still all right.

As the beam of the torch was turned onto him he drew his head from over his shoulder—where it had been tucked amongst the warm feathers—as though we had just awakened him.

“Everything alright, Rammy?” I called.

With the “quip-quip” of welcome that he utters when he sees me, he drowsily snuggled his head back amongst the soft feathers. Evidently bombs have no terrors for him; in all probability because he does not suffer from imagination. He saw the battles in the air and in far clearer detail than we did, but, of course, had no idea as to what it was all about. And he saw—as we did—a great many other strange sights during that momentous summer: enemy formations like clouds of flies; white parachutes that drifted slowly along high up in the blue; A.A. shell-bursts and crashed machines. He doubtless also saw much while we were in bed—listening!

Yet he never seemed to be in the least perturbed by it all.

At that time we had a couple of horses, and Jean and I would sometimes take Ramshaw out to a suitable piece of country in the mediæval style; both of us mounted, and I carrying Ramshaw, hooded of course, on my gloved arm. Incidentally, I made a sling for this arm, which, suspended from my right shoulder, took most of Ramshaw’s weight.

Almost every time we went out we heard, sooner or later, the caterwauling of the sirens and later the droning of the approaching planes. I sometimes suggested to Jean that we were perhaps being foolhardy: that we might find ourselves in some open space one day and be machine-gunned. But, after all, anything MIGHT happen, anywhere, at any time and so we set out again.

We took Ramshaw onto the top of the downs one afternoon to give him some exercise and arrived there just as the sirens started up. On this occasion the German planes

THE BATTLE OF BRITAIN

came over at a much lower altitude ; in fact, as they came roaring towards us we discreetly retired from the centre of the field—which we had reached—to the shadow of a hedge in which we lingered for a while. We watched them circling over Biggin Hill that day and heard the explosions of the bombs they dropped.

Meanwhile, we were steadily going ahead with the new film, and one day took Ramshaw down to the marshes at the mouth of the Thames to get some shots of him flying about over open country. We had hardly got down to work when the distant wailing of sirens warned us that Jerry was about to visit us again. It was an overcast day, and although we could hear, we couldn't at first see, a terrific battle going on above the clouds—the whining of engines revving up as the planes dived ; bursts of machine-gun fire and the " Bom-bom-bom " of cannon. Then, from out of the clouds, a fighter appeared, its engines fairly screaming as it plunged in a vertical dive towards the earth. When it seemed too late a figure freed itself from the plane and was literally left behind in the air as the machine continued its headlong rush. A second or two later a parachute opened, and the figure, which had seemed to fall so slowly compared with the speed of the plane, hung suspended. Only just in time !

Wilfrid Baker, who, with the local Home Guard, had gone to investigate, afterwards told me that the pilot who had baled-out was an R.A.F. officer and that—except for a gash across his forehead, caused by a machine-gun bullet—he was unhurt. The plane had almost completely buried itself in a ploughed field.

Ramshaw was with us in Chipstead, too, when German planes came over in their hundreds. We were returning through the village when the sirens sounded, and, having tied up our horses, stood outside the store with a number of others to watch the " dog-fights." A terrific battle was going on. Evidently we had a number of fighters up, though few indeed compared with the clouds of enemy machines.

ALL BRITISH EAGLE

"Look out! Here's one coming down!" shouted Mr. Smith, who keeps the store.

"There's another!" yelled Jean.

I never saw the second, for I was too intent on watching the first as it came tumbling down, evidently out of control, towards us. I do not remember hearing any noise, although people living a couple of miles away remarked afterwards on the appalling roar that accompanied its swerving descent.

One of the horses, terrified by the din, broke the rein by which it was attached to the smithy and went careering down the village street. How Ramshaw reacted I do not know, although I cannot imagine him behaving with anything but his usual imperturbability. What I know is that the bomber I was watching landed with an almighty crash on the other side of a copse, and that Smith and I went tearing off to see if we could be of any use. Actually, I think, we were just obeying the impulse to be in it. We dashed down Smith's garden; over the hedge and into a field across which we raced in first-rate cross-country style. But having traversed it we were brought to a halt by the upper reaches of the Darenth, and could proceed no further.

We could only look at one another in rather a crest-fallen way and start on a more leisurely journey back to the village. Although all planes had by this time vanished from the sky, there was still quite a number of people talking, and every so often glancing or pointing to the clouds. Charles Wisdom, urbane as ever, was there too and seemed quite distressed to see me so muddy and dishevelled after our chase.

"Why not come in and have a clean-up," he suggested. "You look as though you've been fighting a Jerry, not running after one."

It turned out later that Smith and I could not have done much good even if we had succeeded in reaching the German bomber since all its occupants had been killed.

So, what with one thing and another, there was a good deal of excitement and a great deal more uneasiness during

THE BATTLE OF BRITAIN

that desperate time ; particularly was the uneasiness evident at night-time, sleep was made almost impossible by nuisance planes—" Er-oo. Er-oo. Er-oo "—now further away, now drawing nearer again, and by the intermittent exploding of bombs or land-mines.

And so it went on, days and nights of uncertainty as to what might transpire, and eagerness to do something useful if a state of real emergency should arise. Days and nights of uncertainty too, as regards what might happen in the dim future. Looking ahead I found myself visualising the day when this altogether too large, too rambling, house of ours would be impossible to run. Even then domestic help was becoming more and more difficult to obtain, and more men and women were joining up every day. Evacuees, mostly from the East End of London, were pouring into our neighbourhood, and who could tell what might become of our home when I had been away in America for a few months, and Jean either at school or staying with relatives ?

What we WANTED was a much smaller, more compact, more convenient place. And not one of a row of small houses, for we had the housing and exercising of Ramshaw and Coronation to consider.

It happened luckily, as it has so far turned out, that my friend, Lewis West, had decided to leave the cottage in the park where he had been living. We had often been there in peace-time to spend an evening with him and his television set and had thought that it would be just the sort of home that we should like : electric lights and cooker, small but neat rooms, plenty of outbuildings and roomy stables. In addition, there was a partly walled-in piece of ground that could easily be converted into an enclosure for Ramshaw and Coronation.

That settled it. I arranged with Lewis that all my belongings should be sent over to the cottage—and what couldn't be fitted in would have to be stored in the stables—whenever he moved out.

What to do with Coronation whilst I was in the States I did not know. All my former helpers were in the Services.

ALL BRITISH EAGLE

Leslie and Roddy Klocker in the R.A.F.; Esmond in the Navy; Norman and Philip in the Army. I hardly liked the idea of sending her to a Zoo, for I felt that she would resent being in a wire enclosure as much as any goshawk. Who could I find to look after her? My housekeeper, Mrs. Courtice, very sportingly agreed to do her best—to feed and to keep an eye on her—whilst I was away. It was a lot to undertake. Looking after an eagle for six months would not be a simple matter—especially in war-time. One can hardly imagine Mrs. Courtice shooting a rat or a rook because the supply of chickens' heads had given out! And food, I imagined, would naturally become scarcer. However, we were at war and unusual methods had to be adopted.

We would take over the cottage and would leave Coronation in the care of Mrs. Courtice.

Things having been thus satisfactorily arranged, the day for our departure for the United States dawned. Since the railway line between Sevenoaks and Bromley had, owing to enemy action, ceased to function, I had arranged to take a taxi to the latter place and to proceed thence by rail. Jean, Ramshaw, I and a heap of luggage somehow boarded the taxi and we set out on the first stage of our second war-time journey to the Land of Liberty.

At Bromley we found that, during the night, the line further on had been put out of action, so there was nothing for it but to continue in the taxi to Euston.

It was a long, weary ride, for we went by a very circuitous route. Roads in all directions were roped off because of the risk of burned-out buildings crashing or delayed-action bombs exploding.

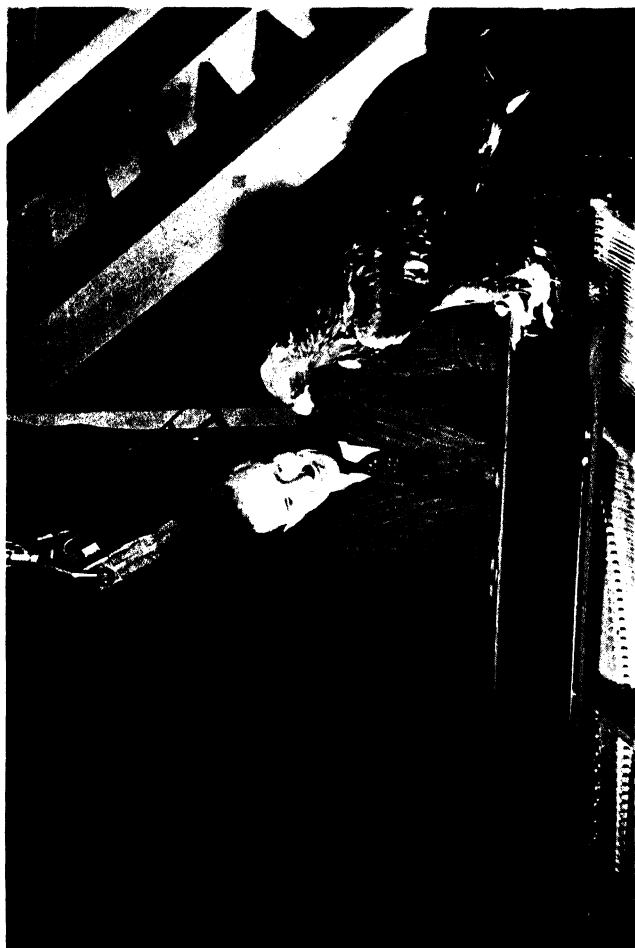
However, we ultimately arrived at Euston where Esmond and his wife, with whom Jean was going to stay for a while, were waiting to see us off.

Soon it was time to say "au revoir."

"Good-bye and good luck," they called, "have a nice crossing; look after old Ramshaw and TAKE CARE OF YOURSELF!"



A BATH ON THE ROOF OF THE GOTHAM



TORPEDOED

"Good luck to you chaps," I shouted back. "Take care of YOUR-selves!"

Hardly had we left the station than the familiar chorus of wailing sirens began.

The Battle of Britain was at its height.

CHAPTER XIV

TORPEDOED

ON our arrival at the port of embarkation our various papers were inspected by the Customs officials and we boarded the ship on which we were to set out on our seventeenth crossing of the Atlantic.

We found that we were on a Dutch liner—the *Volendam*—and that we had both been allotted very comfortable quarters. Ramshaw had a private suite—a disused lavatory—reserved for his sole use, and I was to share a roomy cabin with a most agreeable Canadian named Bryant.

All of this was eminently satisfactory but otherwise the trip looked like being less memorable than the usual Atlantic crossing.

There were over 300 evacuee children on board who seemed somewhat youthful for deck-games or other amusements and those in charge of them appeared to be far too busy to indulge in such frivolities. For the first three days we had little to do except attend boat-drill, which we carried out assiduously, reporting at our particular boat station and listening to a short lecture by one of the officers on the procedure to be followed in case of an emergency; walking round the deck and—as far as I personally was concerned—looking after Ramshaw.

On the third night at sea Bryant and I agreed to turn in early. There was really nothing to stay up for except to "sit around" and drink thin lager beer which was extremely expensive. So we called it a day and were between the sheets by eleven o'clock. We did not turn out the light

ALL BRITISH EAGLE

immediately, for there was something languorous about lying there amid such clean, soft sheets, thinking of the comforts of a trip like this—no telephone to answer, no telegrams, no letters, no bills. A real relaxation—a complete rest, in fact. Bryant, a well-informed fellow on a number of matters, was delivering a discourse on mines and the methods by which ships avoid hitting them.

I wasn't listening very carefully, I'm afraid. My thoughts were more about England—and London. How were things going? Was Jerry still coming over to continue his task of annihilating us? Were Jean and Esmond and his family still alright? Would Lewis soon be leaving the cottage, and, if so, would they manage to get all our furniture into it—and into the adjacent ex-stables? What fun it would be to live out there in the middle of the park. Jean would be able to keep a horse and Ramshaw and Coronation would be close handy. I should have to make some improvements, of course. An electric bath-water heater, for instance, would be a grand thing to have.

I came-to in time to hear Bryant saying :

"So you see they avoid mines by zig-zagging"—at least that's what I thought he said.

"I should have thought," I ventured to suggest, "that by going straight you might very well miss one that you would have hit if you'd zig-zagged."

Bryant proceeded to explain what he really meant. .

"Not mines—torpedoes," he began, "you see . . ." His dissertation was rudely interrupted by a shattering crash which seemed to lift the ship into the air and which set it quivering and swaying.

"My God! We've hit one!" Bryant gasped as he sprang out of his bunk. I do not remember getting out of mine. I do remember having noticed a vertical board along the outer side, put there I imagine, to prevent the occupant from rolling onto the floor in rough weather and I had wondered how it would be possible to climb quickly over this in case of an emergency. I know, in spite of the

TORPEDOED

board, that I was out of the bunk and on my feet in a flash. Bryant was pulling on his trousers and before I could get mine into position was out of the cabin. "You haven't got your boots on!" I shouted after him. His voice came, as from afar, "I'm carrying them!"

I quickly followed him onto the deck and made my way in the almost complete darkness to our boat station where others were already gathering. Some of the children, too, had been brought along. There was no hysteria, no panic. With the aid of such lights as had been improvised I could see that some of the children were wearing lifebelts several sizes too large for them, whilst others were still wrapped in the blankets under which, a few minutes ago, they had been sleeping peacefully. I happened to run into Bryant. He and I held a whispered conversation concerning our probable fate. "Perhaps the ship is not very badly damaged and we shall be able to carry on. Or perhaps we shall go back to England and take another ship." Every now and then I stepped to the side and peered down towards the water—just to see whether I could tell if we were sinking, but we still seemed to be as far above the water as before although the ship had developed a considerable list.

Meanwhile our lifeboat was being lowered and was soon just about on a level with the deck on which we were standing. Then an order was given, with the help of a megaphone by the officer in charge of our boat: "Children into the lifeboat, please. Children first." A seaman was standing ready to help the youngsters into their places, and soon all were seated in the boat. "Now the women. Women first, please." One by one the women followed the children. At this juncture one man tried—I really don't know why, for there was obviously no need for any violent hurry—to force his way into the lifeboat among the women and children. A Dutch sailor standing behind him, put a hand over his shoulder, grabbed him by the chin and hauled him unceremoniously back onto the ship. Otherwise there was no sort of panic although one woman, I remember, was sobbing and muttering to herself. At last all the

ALL BRITISH EAGLE

women and children—at our particular boat-station—were safely packed into the lifeboat.

“Now the men. Men now, please!” announced the voice through the megaphone.

Ever since we had reached the boat-station I had been wondering if I couldn't possibly slip away to try to do something about poor Ramshaw. I was horrified by the thought that I was about to leave him to his fate. But what could I do? Turn him loose on deck, of course, and let him shift for himself. But could he fly the best part of 300 miles? Perhaps the ship would not sink. Whatever I did might be wrong. Meanwhile, we were on parade; ready to carry out any orders that might be given. And an order had come.

Into the boat we climbed. Bryant made a space for me by his side and the rest fitted-in somehow. I don't know how, for the boat looked packed before we men squeezed into it.

“Lower away”—or words to that effect was the next order and we felt ourselves slowly losing height. As we were being lowered and the rope from the davits suspending us gradually lengthened, our boat, because of the wind that was rising, began to develop a swing: very smoothly at first, back and forth, until with a bang we hit the side of the ship. Out again, and once more “bang!” It seemed as though our over-filled little craft must be shattered and some of us, realizing the danger, lined the side of it and, with outstretched hands, tried with tensed muscles to fend off the blow. It needed a whole row of us, but our combined efforts had the desired effect. Now, to make things worse, we discovered that we were no longer being lowered. We were neither going up nor down, but were just hanging—suspended; swinging out some 30 feet from the ship and swinging in again—with a crash—if some of us hadn't been ready to prevent it.

Through it all our boat-load of women and children serenely awaited the next move—completely confident in the officer in charge. Much shouting was going on but since

Approved

George R. I.



College of Arms.
August. 1041.

J.D. H. [unclear] - [unclear]

Charter Herald
 and Inspector of Royal
 Air Force Badges

No. "Le. Ramskau"

from No: — Squadron. 20th January 1942.

TO MR. RAMSHAW FROM ... SQUADRON, 20TH JANUARY, 1942

Royal Air Force Station _____

Mr. Ramshaw has this day
become the official Mascot of No. — Squadron,
and I solemnly promise that
during my term of office as Squadron Commander
I will not under any circumstances permit
the adoption of any other mascot.

J.R. H.S. *W. H. H.*

Witnessed by:-

19th January, 1942.

W. H. H.
W. H. H.

OFFICIAL MASCOT — SQUADRON, 19TH JANUARY, 1942

TORPEDOED

I do not understand Dutch it didn't mean a thing to me. Presently one of the sailors said to me, in English :

"Would you please return onto the ship?"

Thinking that he meant that I weighed too much and was hampering things, and with Ramshaw's predicament still on my mind, I readily agreed.

But how?

It turned out to be a simple matter, for a rope ladder had been lowered from our deck and up this I quickly made my way. Actually it was not because of my weight that I had been asked to return to the ship : it was just by a coincidence that I was the first to be asked to do so. In the end everybody—men, middle-aged women, children, all had to be cleared from the lifeboat. The ropes by which it was being lowered, and which ran over pulleys, had fouled.

So the women and children followed me back onto the ship. The Dutchmen, officers and men, were magnificent. Try to visualise a man standing on the edge of a lifeboat, suspended over a rough sea far out in the Atlantic, at about one in the morning, helping a woman with a child in her arms up a rope ladder. That was one of the incidents I shall not forget.

My chance to find out whether Ramshaw was still alright had come. Now, if necessary, I could turn him loose so that he could take his chance when daylight came. A strong smell of explosive greeted me as I made my way down to the interior of the ship, and for a few moments I feared that his compartment had been blown in.

All, however, was intact. By the light of a match I could see that the old fellow was roosting quite comfortably on the edge of his crate. I should have thought that, since he was not chained to it as he often is, he would have selected some loftier and more natural perch : the edge of a wash-basin or the top of a partition some ten feet high. Evidently he was so fond of his travelling box that the instinct to roost at the highest convenient elevation had been overcome. In any case he seemed comfortable enough—so far.

ALL BRITISH EAGLE

I closed and locked the door and made my way back to the boat-station. On my way to it I again looked over the side of the ship to try to make out whether we were sinking. It was difficult to say as the water was becoming a good deal rougher and great waves were breaking against the ship. At one moment we seemed to be high above the swirling waters, at another within a few feet of them. Dutch seamen pushed past me, shouting orders or talking excitedly. By this time I had decided that I would stay on board the ship—if I could get permission to do so. After all, in such a situation one might as well take one's chance in one place as in any other, and I should at least be able to do something about Ramshaw if the occasion should arise. Catching sight of one of the officers I asked him if I might stay on board. "You see I have my eagle and don't like the idea of leaving him to his fate," I added. "Do as you like," he answered tersely as he hurried on to attend to more important business. Soon afterwards our lifeboat was once more fit for service, and the children—again with no sort of panic—took their places in it. This time the grown-ups were detailed to another boat into which they, too, climbed.

By the inadequate light in which all this was being carried out I could see them gradually descending. There was Bryant and some others with whom I had made friends. "Good luck!" I shouted. "The same to you, and look after old Ramshaw," came the answer. There was a rescue ship, one of the convoy, I understood, standing by to take on board any survivors, but I could see nothing after the boat had reached the water below.

Now I was alone. At least, I was the only passenger left on the ship. Two hours later one of the officers came up to me and said: "We are abandoning the ship. Please get into that lifeboat."

"But," I expostulated, "I've got an eagle here . . ."

"Do not talk about eagles," he answered curtly, "get into that boat."

TORPEDOED

Without further ado I did as I was told and trusting that Ramshaw would somehow survive, made my way towards the last lifeboat. Some 20 or 30 Dutch seamen were piling into it and I took my place amongst them. Now we were being lowered, swinging and banging against the side of the ship almost as drastically as the others. A most unpleasant experience.

I do not know exactly how a lifeboat is disengaged from the ropes that lower it, but I do know that, on this occasion, we felt ourselves suddenly freed, and with tensed muscles hung onto our seats until, with a bang, we hit the water. Our boat turned over onto its side as a big wave caught it and we missed being capsized by a miracle. Somehow we became right-side-up again. Then, for some time, we fought, in that angry sea, to get clear of the ship. It seemed to have some magnetic control over our craft. I took an oar and tried to help, but, shoving at a wrong angle, only succeeded in breaking the oar. In spite of our repeated efforts we continued to swing back again. It seemed hopeless and I could only think that we were being drawn down by the sinking ship. Some of us were baling out the water which threatened to fill our craft, and I turned a hand to that job too.

At last we were clear, and I seized another oar and did my small best to help to propel us still further away. Water burst over us as wave after wave hit our boat. We worked for dear life and got well away from the ship. We were alone in the Atlantic, gasping for breath and soaked with perspiration and sea water.

Personally, I have never liked the sea—except when on a comfortable liner, with plenty to eat, jolly companions and no worries—and have always admired and still do admire men who willingly take on the life at sea as a means of livelihood.

And here we were, out on the Atlantic, hundreds of miles from home without any idea of our ultimate destination. I found myself thinking that since I had always instinctively disliked the sea, this was probably the sort of end to

ALL BRITISH EAGLE

which I was destined. Our experience, I realize quite well, was nothing to what so many of our gallant fellows have endured, but as far as I was concerned this looked like the end of everything, and I was reconciled to my fate. Meanwhile we continued to bale out the water that looked like getting the better of us. Some three hours later we saw a green light in the distance. We did not, of course, know to what nationality it belonged. One of the Dutchmen in our boat had a torch which he flashed. The green light drew nearer. At last I could make out the shape of the ship; could even see figures on her deck—silhouetted against the sky. It was a British destroyer, although, at the time, I didn't recognise it as such. It might have been a German U-boat for all I knew. The Dutch seamen knew better, however, and shouts of welcome went up as it came closer to us. I had always thought that a destroyer was a low-lying flattish sort of an affair, but this ship seemed, literally, to tower above us.

Now the shouting grew louder. A line was thrown from the destroyer towards us. Some one caught it and we were drawn closer and closer to our rescuer's side. At last we were within a few yards of her, rising and falling as the waves swept by us. While we were momentarily perched on the top of a wave I had time to call, "Hooray, chaps!" before we sank down again. Closer still. So close that one of our crew—braver than the rest, it seemed to me—jumped at the psychological moment onto the deck of the destroyer. Then down we went and up again—and another made the jump. So it went on, down amongst the waves and up again for some one to make the leap, until it was my turn. I braced myself and when it seemed we were on the crest of the wave—jumped. I managed, encumbered by my lifebelt—to grab the hands that were stretched out towards me and was dragged on board. I wrenched my ankle doing it but was on a firm deck—right side up!

British seamen gathered round me. "Were you a passenger on the ship?" one of them asked. "Yes," I replied, "and I think I am the only one here. The others left in

TORPEDOED

lifeboats some hours ago." I was then taken along to be interviewed by the captain of the ship, who, after questioning me, told one of the officers to take me down to the ward room. Here I met the Doctor who looked me over, examined my twisted ankle and told me that I might use his bunk for the rest of the night.

"But what about you?" I asked him. "Where are you going to sleep?"

"Oh, I shall be alright," he assured me. "I'll sit in this arm-chair. It must be close on six o'clock. Breakfast will be along in no time."

I thanked him for his kindness and proceeded to divest myself of my lifebelt.

"I think you had better not take that off," the Doctor suggested calmly. "You never know what may happen on a ship like this."

"I'm sorry, Doctor," I replied, "but I'm wet through. I think I'll take off the belt and my clothes and chance to luck."

"Well, please yourself. I can lend you a dressing-gown if it's going to be of any service."

It was, indeed, of tremendous service. I wrapped myself up in its cosy folds and, feeling pretty well exhausted, imagined I should soon be in the land of dreams. In that I was completely wrong. We started hunting a U-boat, at least I believe that is what we were doing; tearing through the raging seas at terrific speed and rolling as we did so to such an extent that I was, more than once, very nearly precipitated onto the floor.

The Doctor, noticing my efforts to stay put, pushed along an arm-chair and wedged it into position with its back jammed against the edge of my bunk.

By this time, in addition to my other troubles, I was feeling most horribly sea-sick. What with exhaustion, my twisted, aching ankle and mal-de-mer I was really in a bad way. The Doctor evidently noticed that I wasn't looking up to standard for he brought me a "peg" of brandy. Brandy! Normally, I should have appreciated it

ALL BRITISH EAGLE

enormously but the bare thought of it fairly nauseated me. I turned away, and, thanking the Doctor for his thoughtfulness, wearily closed my eyes.

I tried to sleep, but the rolling of the ship, the thump and hiss of the severed waves within about three inches of my head made any sort of rest impossible. How I envied the Doctor in his chair, sleeping so peacefully through it all !

Breakfast was presently served. I do not remember what it consisted of on that first morning, but I know that all the officers present seemed to enjoy a hearty meal, talking and laughing the while. Most of their amusing remarks—at least, I was sure they must have been amusing, but I had long since lost the ability even to smile—were greeted by loud laughter which was accompanied by the trembling and roaring of the ship as she cut through the mountainous waters. I remained on that destroyer for several days and nights and believe I began to grow accustomed to the incessant noise and movement. And one morning I awoke to find that all that seemed to have ceased. I opened my eyes. For the first time since I had been on board a port-hole was open and sunlight was streaming in. Was I dreaming? Except for the ankle which pained me a good deal if I tried to work it, I felt perfectly well ; was ready to go out onto the deck and see what it all meant. That, however, wasn't necessary, for, even as I sat upright and could thus look out of the port-hole, I could see that we were quite close to a very pleasant shore, along which we were smoothly and silently gliding. At the edge of the water was a little collection of houses, some of them half-hidden in the shade of a cluster of trees from which a winding lane, with green fields on either side of it made its way towards a heather-covered hill. Beyond, blue-grey mountains completed the picture. I hobbled on deck as quickly as I could. Some of the officers were standing there admiring the view and I learned that we were back in the land which had seen **Ramshaw's** entry into the world.

So I said good-bye to those who had shown me such

TORPEDOED

immense kindness and proceeded by motor-boat to the shore. Later that day I saw a moving sight. A shipload of survivors from the ill-fated *Volendam* was approaching the jetty. Scores of children were lining the deck of their deliverer, waving handkerchiefs, singing "Roll out the barrel," cheering lustily. Home again for them too ! What a grand show they had put up ! !

In due course I found myself in Glasgow, where I was installed at the Central Hotel. Needless to say I at once set out to buy myself the wherewithal for a shave, also a shirt—I was wearing my pyjama jacket in lieu of one—tie, collar and so forth. I also kept in constant touch with the shipping people to find out if there were any news of the *Volendam* although I met one of her officers who told me that she had sunk.

To say that I was distressed, shocked, at the idea of poor old Ramshaw perishing under such conditions is to put it mildly, yet if the report were true, there would be nothing for it but to return home as soon as possible and to set sail again for the States—alone.

But, later that day, the shipping firm telephoned to me the astounding news that the *Volendam* had been towed back and that she was safely beached at the mouth of a Scottish river. Beached ! So there was still a chance that Ramshaw survived. On the following day—after much pulling of wires—I accompanied a group of officials on a tour of inspection of the ill-fated ship. We travelled in a taxi-cab, we travelled by rail, we travelled on a tender. At last we could see the ship, partly submerged, but with stern high and dry above the water. It was with some difficulty that I climbed on board ; my ankle had been bothering me and the attention of a doctor in Glasgow and the help of a walking stick hadn't put it right. Still I made my way down the steps and along the gangway to Ramshaw's suite. There was a good deal of water here, through which I had to wade and I unlocked the fateful door with considerable misgivings. The hinges creaked dismally as I pushed it open and peered into the semi-darkness. The

ALL BRITISH EAGLE

place looked deserted and smelt musty. Ramshaw's crate had parted company with its morrings and was floating forlornly among bits of board and straw bottle-cases—and there was no sign of Ramshaw. I was actually looking about for his body when I heard the familiar "twoot-twoot" of welcome above me.

I peered up and there was my old friend perched on the partition, between which and the roof there was just enough room for him as long as he maintained a crouching position.

I don't remember—I don't think I ever knew—just what happened at that moment. I imagine that whatever I did or said was largely sub-conscious, but that I muttered, "Hullo, old boy. I AM glad to see you," or words to that effect. Again I do not know, but it is just possible that Ramshaw, perhaps for the first time in his life, was pleased to see me too.

CHAPTER XV

SAFELY ACROSS

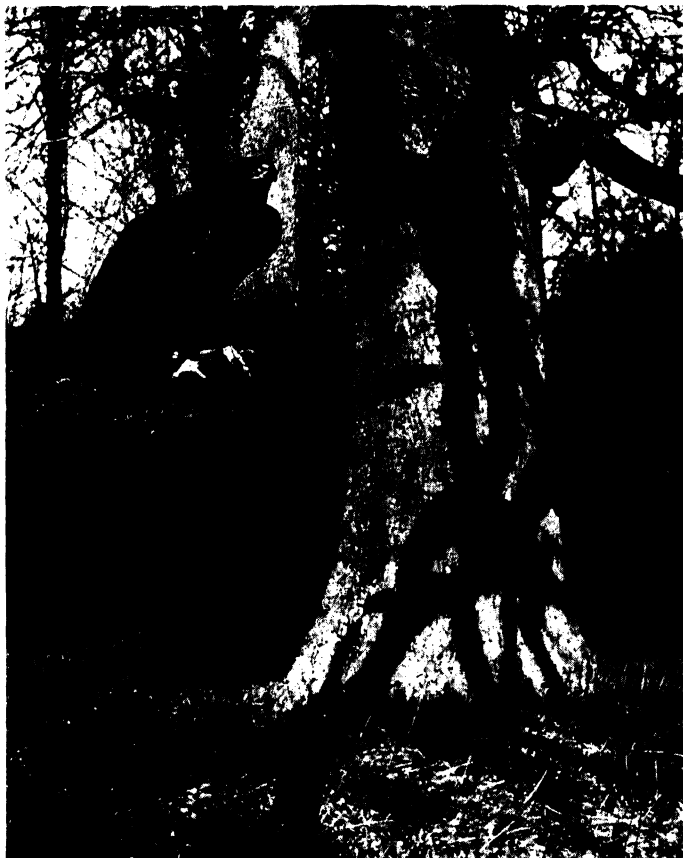
Two days after the experience related in the last chapter, Jean, Ramshaw and I were back again in our Kentish home. Jean, whom I had kept posted as to our movements, had left the friends with whom she had been staying and had met us in London. We had plenty to talk about—or rather I had plenty to talk about—on the journey to Seven-oaks! It looked as though I should be at home for some time as the Shipping Agency told me that all ships were absolutely full-up for the next two months or so and that, in consequence, they wouldn't be able to get me a berth.

We therefore settled down to a quiet life in the country; Ramshaw—who seemed none the worse for his experience on the *Volendam*—was taken out for a lung-opener almost every day, and obviously enjoyed the excursions. We looked forward to many days of such relaxation.

One morning, however, the Agency rang up to say that, by the greatest of good luck, they could reserve a berth for



MR. RAMSHAW AND THE SQUADRON OF WHICH HE IS MASCOT



MR. RAMSHAW, A PORTRAIT

SAFELY ACROSS

me on a ship sailing for the States in a week's time. "It will mean travelling third-class," they told me, "but it's the best we can do. If you don't take this chance it may mean that you won't get another for a couple of months. Apart from this one berth—in a cabin by itself—the ship is completely full."

I jumped at the opportunity. After all, Colston Leigh had been quite worried—would probably be really anxious after our mishap—lest I should not arrive as arranged. "Organizations are nervous about booking you," he explained, "they're afraid you won't get here."

Under these conditions I could not afford to be fussy. Travelling steerage might be quite good fun and I was to have a cabin to myself. In any case, I was prepared to put up with discomfort—providing I got safely across.

So we set out for the second time. Once more the port of embarkation was reached; once more we passed the emigration officials; once more we boarded a ship and once more I found suitable quarters for Ramshaw. It seemed that we were "all set to go," as the Americans say. But, for some reason unknown to us passengers, we did not leave at once. In fact, we hung about for some considerable time.

During our first night of waiting, enemy aircraft came over and dropped some bombs in our vicinity—one of them a good deal too close to our ship to be pleasant. In bed at the time and in a state of semi-consciousness I vaguely heard a whistling scream followed by a thump. I think the thump awakened me. In any case I should have been awakened without delay, for we had on board a number of continental refugees who lacked the restraint that was shown by the British evacuees on the *Volendam*.

As I lay wondering whether it really was a bomb I thought I had heard or whether I had been dreaming, there came sounds of hurrying footsteps; the opening and banging of doors; the buzz of high-pitched voices; of people rushing past my cabin and of half-smothered gasps of terror.

Evidently it HAD been a bomb that I had heard!

ALL BRITISH EAGLE

I got up, slipped on some clothes and went out into the gangway. Little groups of excited people had collected, and a good deal of noise was still going on. I could hear the voice of one of the stewards trying to re-assure his charges. In the end he must have succeeded—partially, that is, for a number of the passengers spent the rest of the night sitting, fully dressed, on the stairs.

The following day passed and still we did not leave.

I discovered that the Captain of the ship was an old school pal of mine, and spent a very jolly afternoon in his cabin—talking mostly about birds in which he is keenly interested. I also found that several other friends were on board, amongst them Jack Pilgrim, a member of the British Club in New York. I saw quite a lot of Jack on the trip in spite of the fact that he, like the others, was travelling first-class.

I began to think that the trip wouldn't be so bad after all—if only we could get a move on.

On the second night of waiting, German planes again came over, but, although we heard some resounding "B-r-r-roomps," did not drop anything near us. Our continental protegees, nevertheless, became more panic-stricken than on the previous night. At the foot of the stairs a surging crowd was groaning and wailing: "Don't leave me." "Vot are ve going to do?" Some British sailors, on their way to join a famous ship then lying off New York in the Hudson River, did their best to console them. "It's alright: take it easy." "Take it easy; there's nothing to worry about." "Everything's alright. Take it easy."

I should hate to seem to suggest that I am any more courageous than the majority of us, but this exhibition of abject terror annoyed me. How utterly different from the behaviour of the British children on the *Volendam*. "The ship's alarm hasn't sounded yet," I reminded one young woman who, with tears on her cheeks was muttering what I supposed was a prayer in a language I couldn't understand. "What about waiting till we hear that before we give up all hope?"

SAFELY ACROSS

The ship's alarm did not sound, and the A.A. fire gradually subsided, so we returned to our beds—or to our places on the stairs.

Almost to our surprise we found ourselves out on the ocean one morning. The journey had commenced. As it proceeded Ramshaw and I met some most intriguing—and sometimes most surprising—people. For example, an obviously well-educated—and I gathered once well-to-do Pole, who was in the second class. He knew something about falconry and was tremendously interested in Ramshaw. Before we landed he had become so confidential that he told me many of his experiences when the Germans invaded his country. Before the war he had had his own aeroplane. "I used sometimes to fly in it to Berlin," he added, with a touch of sadness in his voice. "Just before we were invaded," he went on, "my head-man came to me and in an arrogant tone which I had never heard him use before, said that he would not be serving me any longer. 'There is to be a new order that is to change everything,' he had announced. On the following day I found that my aeroplane had been burnt. The Germans were then close by. I left everything and made my way to Britain."

I expressed my sympathy with him and we talked at some length about his intentions when he reached the United States.

Towards some of the others, however, I felt less amicably disposed. A gentleman, for instance, who always went about wearing what looked like a club or regimental tie. One day I happened to get into conversation with him and asked whether his tie had any special significance.

His reply rather startled me :

"Oh, yes. Zat iss ze Austrian Artillery tie," he answered quite composedly.

"The AUSTRIAN Artillery !" I repeated.

"Yes. I vos vit ze Austrian Artillery during ze last vor," he hastened to explain as though rather proud of this portion of his career.

There was an equally surprising lady who told me she

ALL BRITISH EAGLE

was going to the States to give lectures by which she hoped to obtain some money for the destitute British. I asked her the name of her manager, and her reply was that she didn't have a manager as she felt sure she could secure plenty of engagements by herself.

I then asked her if she had written out the lecture which she intended to deliver.

"Oh, yes," she answered promptly, apparently delighted to find some one who evinced so much interest in her work. "Would you care to read it through?"

I expressed my eagerness to do so and she went down to her cabin to get it.

Presently she returned and handed me the manuscript. I thanked her and retired to a quiet corner to read it.

How she, unless she were mentally deranged, could have had the effrontery to show anyone—particularly a complete stranger—such a "lecture" is, to me, completely incomprehensible. It was the story of the dreadful privations which the people of Britain were suffering, and was evidently meant to soften the hearts of the most brutal—or the most mean. It told of the bombed-out, half-naked, shell-shocked, starving people of Britain. It was, indeed, calculated to bring tears to the eyes!

I told her I did not think the British people had yet reached the desperate stage that she had depicted. I also mentioned that I could not believe that her lecture tour would ever materialize since we already had a British War Relief Society, which was very efficiently run, and it might not be discreet to try to start a sort of Private War Relief Society. "In any case," I wound up, "I'm afraid your lectures will never be approved by the authorities."

A number of equally amazing indications of the general attitude of the majority of our fellow passengers could be cited, but would be a further digression.

But one incident which concerned Ramshaw as well as me, might be worth a short description. There was to be a ship's concert—the proceeds of which were to go to the



A PROBLEM PICTURE : MR. RAMSHAW AND THE LAMP



FIFTEEN YEARS—AND STILL GOING STRONG

SAFELY ACROSS

Seamen's Charity. I was asked if I would bring Ramshaw along and put him through his paces. I agreed ; and on the appointed evening was sitting with Jack in the lounge waiting for someone to tell me when Ramshaw and I had been timed to appear. One of the foreign gentlemen had been appointed as a sort of M.C. or "compere," but was not to be found. The band was playing a piece by way of opening the show and still there was no sign of the "compere." I was sitting on one chair and Ramshaw was perched on the back of another. Jack and I were talking—I forget about what. Suddenly the "Compere" came in, and standing in front of me said abruptly : "You vill go on now. Ve are r-yeady." He then turned away, but I called him back.

"Like that, is it?" I asked. "A living picture of the Gestapo! Well, I'm not ready. I've got to get my little bag and pick up the eagle. Why didn't you tell me when I was expected to go on?"

"Nevair mind. Ve vill get someone else. You vill go on lader."

By this time the band had finished playing the overture and the audience was clamouring for Ramshaw.

"We want the eagle!" "We want the eagle!"

When the compere tried to tell them that they "would haf de eagle lader," they refused to listen and shouted the louder.

Back he came into the lounge. His attitude had changed. "Would you please get your sings and go on now," he enquired.

We had a little chat which cleared the air quite a bit, and Ramshaw and I then proceeded with our turn.

Curious that a refugee, sailing under the British flag should have assumed such a pose. Almost as curious as the behaviour towards the end of the trip of those who had panicked and cried for help when danger threatened, for when we reached what seemed to be safe waters their whole attitude changed. Complaints and criticisms were the order of the day. Stewards were there to be ordered

ALL BRITISH EAGLE

about. In short, laments were replaced by dissatisfaction ; tears by arrogance.

After a journey lasting rather less than a fortnight we reached New York. Ramshaw had, I think, had an unusually pleasant, or should we say, an unusually not—unpleasant trip, and I had not been at all badly off. The journey had certainly not been lacking in interest, even if I had missed some of the amenities which steerage fails to provide. Our arrival at New York was much as in the preceding year, except that I was more than ever impressed by the dazzling lights of Broadway and the warmth of our welcome at the Gotham. Everybody seemed to know about our mishap on the *Volendam* and Ramshaw's miraculous survival. I became quite accustomed to telling the story of Bryant's discourse on ways of avoiding mines, my sea-sickness on the destroyer, Ramshaw's miraculous survival and—a thing I shall never forget—the heroism of the British children.

CHAPTER XVI

STEAM-HEAT AND PALM TREES

For the next six months Ramshaw and I led hectic and much diversified lives. We also experienced considerable climatic extremes which ranged from the 30° sub-zero fridity of Minnesota to the sub-tropical geniality of Christmas time in Florida.

The tour went, in the main, much as other tours in the States have gone : gratifying shows, bad shows ; anxieties and reliefs ; frustrations and successes ; whilst every now and then some memorable incident would occur or some forgotten face come to light again.

Whilst in Detroit we were staying at the Book-Cadillac Hotel when, one evening, the phone bell in my room rang and I picked up the receiver to answer it.

"Is that Captain Knight?" asked the voice at the other end.

STEAM-HEAT AND PALM TREES

"It is," I said.

"Is it the Captain Knight who went over the top from Regina Trench with the Royal West Kents in 1916?"

"It is," I again answered.

"Well, this is Christmas of Battalion H.Q. Do you remember me?"

"Yes, rather. Of course I do."

"I saw a picture of your eagle in the paper to-day and wondered if you could be the same. May I come round and see you for a few moments?"

"Of course, delighted. Come as soon as you can. I'll be waiting for you."

We spent an absorbingly interesting evening—doing nothing more exciting than to talk until the small hours about people, places and incidents that we both remembered. Only those who were "out there" in the last war will be able to understand how we revelled in it. And perhaps the success of the evening was emphasised by the facts that the meeting was so entirely unexpected; that we had some canned beer to drink and were so far away from home.

Ramshaw did not attend on this occasion. As on previous tours he wasn't taken to every function—he didn't come with the rest of us to see the Press show of "The Great Dictator," or to the party at the Club afterwards; nor did he sit in the wings of the Philadelphia Academy of Music to listen to the Symphony Orchestra—but I fancy he enjoyed little escapades of his own. What fun he must have derived from tearing to pieces two bath towels in the Buffalo Hotel or from the nocturnal adventure in which to quote the local newspapers, he "acted as a Burglar Alarm!" That was—still is—a strange story. We were staying with Bill and Edna Huff at their place at Brookline outside Philadelphia, and Ramshaw had been chained to his crate, on which he likes to roost, only a few feet below the window of my bedroom.

Usually, in such a situation, he sleeps silently enough, but this time I was awakened, at about two o'clock, by a loud clattering and the violent jangling of his bell. I jumped

ALL BRITISH EAGLE

out of bed and peering out of the window was just able to discern the figure of a man mixed-up, it seemed, with Ramshaw's chain and the crate. At that moment the figure flashed a torch which brilliantly lit up the half-spread wings and startled expression of my partner. Instantly the light was extinguished and I heard the sound of footsteps hurriedly retreating into the distance. Obviously someone, wandering for some unknown reason onto Bill's grounds, had blundered into the "burglar alarm." What a shock he must have received!

Pulling on a dressing-gown I crept downstairs to see whether Ramshaw had been hurt in the tussle, and, switching on the light in the kitchen, opened the back door so that I could see what damage, if any, had been done.

To my relief—and rather to my surprise—my old friend was sitting there quite composedly and even uttered a little chirp of welcome when he saw who it was. Obviously he hadn't been in the least put out by the nocturnal collision. He might even have been rather amused to see me so worked up!

Twice on the tour he managed to get his hood off while he was waiting behind the scenes till it was time for his appearance and, in almost complete darkness, came trotting onto the stage as though eager to find out how far we'd got with the story. It is really most disconcerting when Exhibit No. 1 makes his entry just as one is trying to describe a most dramatic sequence in the film.

His behaviour when he ridded himself of his hood for a third time under these conditions, was even more deplorable. He refrained from making a premature appearance and instead ripped open the parcel of beef which had been placed on a shelf and consumed the entire contents—three or four days' supply!

After such a gorge he tends to lose interest in what is going on, and, in consequence, puts up a very poor show. Naturally I feel horribly embarrassed. Again it is Ramshaw's turn to laugh.

During the early part of that December—1940—we

STEAM-HEAT AND PALM TREES

experienced, whilst we were in Omaha, some of the most bitterly cold weather I can remember. Perhaps it wasn't really any worse than the 30° below zero we had previously known, but I felt it so much more that it left a lasting impression. In the hotels, restaurants and stores, steam-heat was turned on full blast in order to counteract the withering cold outside, while glass after glass of iced-water was drunk to counteract the stifling effects of the steam-heat. I found myself longing for a less violent climatic situation. Then came a ray of hope—the expectation of spending the Christmas vacation in Florida.

It all came about through the suggestion of my good friend, James Pond. We were talking one evening about this coming Christmas and how I might spend my time.

“Well, if, as you say, you have no dates between the 20th of December and the beginning of the New Year, why not go down to Florida? If you would like to make the visit I think I can fix some dates for you and old Ramshaw. You could easily cover your expenses. If you like, I'll write to some friends of mine and tell them you'll be down and would be prepared to put on your show.”

To this suggestion I readily agreed. I could think of nothing more to my liking than a week or so of warm sunshine and complete relaxation. Perhaps Bill Russell—son of the Dean of Columbia University—might like to come along too. He could probably borrow one of the family's enormous, high-powered cars so that we could drive down. The money I should make out of my “dates” ought to cover all expenses. Bill was all for the idea; he is a keen naturalist and is the author of one of the few books on falconry published in America.

Things worked out extraordinarily smoothly, and on December 21st we set out on the long road from New York to Miami. Each night was spent at one of those “holiday camps” with which the States are liberally bestrewn, and invariably we fastened Ramshaw to his crate just beneath our bedroom window. It was a grand holiday, which even the journey down made worth while.

ALL BRITISH EAGLE

The State of Florida is exceedingly flat and more or less open, so that we flew Ramshaw without much fear of losing him. In the end he saw a great deal more of Florida and its surroundings than we did. He did not indulge his natural bent for hunting, for the reason that there was no suitable quarry at which he could be flown—at least we never saw anything, although we passed the bodies of various animals lying in the road : opossums, cats, dogs, and a calf that had been killed by cars.

Nevertheless he enjoyed himself immensely, particularly, perhaps, when he had the laugh on us by breaking loose and sailing about in the sky on two occasions.

He made his first "get-away"—by breaking his chain while we were staying at that lovely hotel which overlooks Florida's Lake Placid.

Bill and I were returning from a bird-watching walk along the lake shore when one of the hotel servants came running towards us. "The eagle's gone!" he shouted.

We hurried to where Ramshaw ought to have been to find that—just as had happened when he had got loose in New York—one of the links in his chain had given way. I was speechless. He was away again. And after all the precautions we had taken. Again a broken chain! But the chain was a new one: I had bought it specially only a few days before. Had anybody seen him? When was he last seen here? Doesn't ANYBODY know anything?

Bill and I went rushing off in different directions in the hope that one of us might locate him. Towards the end of the day we met again. Neither of us had seen a sign of him. As we debated on the likelihood of his having killed a racoon or an opossum our conversation came to an abrupt stop.

Surely that couldn't have been the tinkle of his bell? By jove, it was! And there was Ramshaw, high in the air over the lake and gliding gradually nearer to us. What an unforgettable picture! The Lake—Placid, indeed!—was smooth as a sheet of glass, the glowing sunset mirrored in its still surface; the trees at its far edge half-hidden in

STEAM-HEAT AND PALM TREES

a golden-pink haze, and Ramshaw, lower now in the clear sky, still floating nearer.

The defaulter finally pitched, not 30 yards away, on a conveniently handy cocoa-nut palm before planing down to a lure I threw out.

Once more I breathed a sigh of relief and settled down again to enjoy the wonders of Florida.

I believe the place which appealed to us most—and all places were delightful—was Pompano, that superb spot on the Atlantic where coconut palms line the sandy shore ; where we had no responsibilities ; where we enjoyed exquisite weather, met charming people, ate the last word in food—perfectly cooked ; with bedrooms overlooking the Atlantic for Bill and me and a disused chicken-run for Ramshaw. Could anything be more ideal ? The whole “set-up” was entirely faultless until, returning from a day at Palm Beach, Bill and I were greeted with the news that Ramshaw had AGAIN broken loose. Throughout the day, they said, he had been delighting the guests by his aerial demonstrations over the sea.

“And where is he now ?” was my first question.

“Well, the last we saw of him was over that spit of sand with the palms on it. Look, that bit that runs out into the sea.”

“And how long ago was that ?”

“Oh, that must have been about three o'clock, I should think. Eddy ! When was it we last saw the eagle ?”

“Round about five o'clock.”

“FIVE O'CLOCK !” I cut in hopefully. “About half an hour ago ?”

“Aw, no, it was just after lunch. Gosh ! He was up at a heck of a height. Sailin' along. . . .”

“That wasn't any eagle,” an eavesdropper interrupted, “that was a turkey buzzard.”

“Well, thanks for the information !” I called smilingly as we hurried away.

Bill and I searched far and wide but had no luck. Before turning in we inspected Ramshaw's chain, which was still

ALL BRITISH EAGLE

intact. This time it was the clip at the end of it which was at fault. For some reason—probably lack of oil—this had failed to function properly and had remained open when it should have been shut ; the swivel had slipped out and Ramshaw was once more at large—and liable to get caught in branches since the swivel still joined his jesses.

At daybreak we were astir again. Bill went along the shore while I made for the more wooded country inland. After an hour of seemingly aimless wandering I suddenly found myself face to face, as it were, with the rascal. Actually he was perched in a pine tree, about 40 feet up, and it was only by a lucky chance that I happened to catch sight of him. I threw out a chicken's head, which I had optimistically brought along, which Ramshaw, after scrutinising it for a few moments, flew down to sample.

So, once again, by colossal good fortune, he was safely back.

Now Bill was missing, and I tramped weary miles to find him.

A day or two later we left the languorous warmth, the blue skies, the coconut palms and the glamorous, scantily-clothed ladies for the blizzards and steam-heat and racoon-coats of the Northern States.

As we were leaving Philadelphia snow commenced to fall, and by the time we had reached New York we were ploughing our way through drifts of it. I said " Good-bye " to Bill, for I didn't expect to see him again before we left on our next tour—to the Middle West.

In Chicago where we were installed as usual at the Blackstone Hotel we renewed our acquaintance with old friends, Tracey and Anne, Burt Massee, Maurice Needham, Jack Sturtevant and many others.

Ramshaw and I were kept busy appearing in places in or near to the City : the Field Museum ; the Adventurers' Club ; South Bend ; La Grange ; Winnetka ; Milwaukee, and so forth. We had a really unique experience on the train coming back from the last named. Ramshaw, as usual, was in his crate in the baggage car—at least I had every reason to believe that he was—whilst I was absorbed in a

STEAM-HEAT AND PALM TREES

magazine. Presently I felt a touch on my shoulder and looking up, saw a shortish man bending over me.

"Pardon me," he said, "but I believe you're Captain Knight."

"Yes. That's my name."

"Well, I hope you'll pardon my disturbing you like this, but I've always wanted to meet you and somehow have never before managed to. I believe you have a tame eagle?"

"Yes, I certainly have," I answered, wondering where this conversation was going to lead us.

"Well, I must introduce myself. The name is Mr. Ramshaw!" he explained, holding out his hand which, needless to say, I grasped warmly. I really felt a little like howling with laughter. It seemed rather incongruous to be shaking hands with Mr. Ramshaw!

"I'm delighted to meet you," I said, "and I hope you'll come round to the hotel and see your namesake one day."

And on the following afternoon Mr. Ramshaw called to see Mr. Ramshaw.

Towards the end of our tour we found ourselves back at the dear old Gotham. It was quite like being at home again! The same room—2101—for me; the same pent-house for Ramshaw; jolly company at the Club and many old friends.

We did a number of shows in New York and were privileged to appear yet again at the Harvard Club. What marvellous shows we always had there. And this time we had a greater reception than ever. So great that some of the lads from the British Club who didn't bother to come along in good time couldn't get in. The place was filled up. The reason for this unprecedented situation was that Curt Hansen, in publicising the show had stated that Captain Ramshaw and Mr. Knight would both be present and that after the films had been shown one or the other would fly round the hall.

At that time us Britishers were enjoying a great popularity in the States—and among the poorer classes too. For instance, as I drove to the Club, with Ramshaw on my

ALL BRITISH EAGLE

arm, the taxi-driver half-turned his head towards me and asked : " You from England ? "

" That's right," I answered.

" I tort so. I know by your accent. My parents from England too."

" Really ! What part ? " I asked.

" I nevair been there myself. But it's some place near London. Place called Genoa."

" Ah, yes," I responded. " Nice place. Not far from where I live !!! "

Not long after the Harvard Club show I was talking to a friend—who is, incidentally, in the publicity business—and was much interested in his views on the film I had shown and in an idea he had concerning a subsequent production.

" I think your film is grand, Charles," he encouraged me by saying, " and you certainly succeed in putting it right over, but—now don't be sore at me—I somehow feel that you could do something bigger. I mean why can't old Ramshaw do something worth while in this War situation ? We've heard a lot about the Eagle Squadron. Why shouldn't Ramshaw form ~~his~~ Private Eagle Squadron ? Sounds crazy, but, believe me, it would make a swell picture. Why not have his Squadron fly over to Germany and tear the pants off Hitler ? Say, there's an idea ! Cut out the Nature stuff and give your audiences something to make 'em hold onto their chairs. People are tired of all this war talk. They want amusement, relaxation. They want to laugh. Hitler, with old Ramshaw after him ! Oh, Boy, what a wow ! "

" Yes, Ed. ; but I think it would be as well to include some serious sequences," I ventured to suggest, not being over-keen on the " Jungle thriller " type of picture.

" Sure, if you feel that way about it. But listen, Charles, I'm serious. This is a great idea."

" Oh, I realise that, but it wouldn't hurt to include some shots of what Ramshaw is really doing. Here in New York, for instance," I persisted.

STEAM-HEAT AND PALM TREES

"Why, that's quite an idea, too," he agreed.

"Very well. How about, first : Scenes in New York, showing what sort of a life he leads over here. Second : how he carries on at home, including scenes of whatever happens, and third : Ramshaw's Squadron in action."

"Okay ! But make this Eagle Squadron the big feature. That's what'll get 'em."

Work on the new film was commenced forthwith : Ramshaw in his pent-house ; at cocktail parties ; Broadway at night with its electric advertisements, and so on—all in colour.

All this time Ramshaw behaved in exemplary fashion—except on one occasion. On the staff of the hotel was a young German named Walter—or VARLTER, as he pronounced it—who frequently turned up when I had Ramshaw out on the roof. One day Varlter, as he had done so many times before, extended his hand to stroke Ramshaw's glossy neck. In a flash Ramshaw shot out his foot and missed the offending hand by almost nothing as Varlter snatched it out of the way.

"That's funny," I said laughingly. "He's never done that before. He must know you're a German and is practising the final scene of the film !"

Varlter laughed uneasily and did not again attempt to caress Ramshaw.

Meanwhile we continued to put over our shows and went "on the air" several times. We were much flattered to be again on the Fred Allen Hour and on one memorable occasion appeared on the "Hobby-Lobby" Program : memorable because we were presented with an "Award of Merit" by the Fels-Naphtha Soap Chips people who sponsored the entertainment.

I also received a letter from an official of the firm saying how much our appearance had been appreciated, and that a box or two of Soap Chips would be forwarded to the Gotham. To my profound regret we left the States almost at once, and the box or boxes of soap chips never materialized. I still do not know what soap chips are.

ALL BRITISH EAGLE

· CHAPTER XVII

MR. RAMSHAW—ROYAL AIR FORCE MASCOT

Our fourth war-time Atlantic crossing was made on a Dutch freighter in May, 1941. In spite of rather cramped quarters and the fact that, for part of the trip, the cabin I shared with a very jolly Irishman, had about three inches of water swilling about on the floor, we were quite comfortable. We pitched and rolled about a good deal and took a long time, but what else could be expected ?

Ramshaw had the use of an empty store-room which allowed him room to fly about a little, and he, like the rest of us passengers, remained in good health and spirits throughout the trip.

On such a boat there are not, of course, the amenities that one expects to find on a liner in peace-time ; no deck-games, for instance. We, however, overcame that deficiency when someone found a discarded deck-tennis quoit. Why not play deck-tennis ? We set to work and made a net out of some stringy sacks—which had, I believe, contained cabbages ; marked out a rough court with a piece of chalk someone else found and were all ready for the liner's most popular deck-game. We had some splendid sets—until the quoit was accidentally thrown overboard.

Except for the exploding of some depth-charges and certain periods of apprehensiveness, we quite enjoyed the trip. There were most congenial fellow-passengers on board who were on their way back to England for various reasons. One of them, whose business was in Guatemala, was on his way back to England so that he might spend his leave at home !

We got a lot of fun out of the most childish pranks. A favourite game, in rough weather, was to wait inside the entrance to the dining saloon until a wave had crashed across the low-lying centre part of the ship and then, before

MR. RAMSHAW—R.A.F. MASCOT

the next one came over, to dash across and into the door on the other side which led to the smoking-room. Once, to the delight of the others, I got across to this door safely enough but found myself confronted by a steward carrying an enormous pile of plates. He didn't know I was there, for he couldn't see over his plates and I couldn't very well shove him aside without risk of much broken china. Before I could make him understand the situation another wave came over and soaked me to the skin.

A month after our appearance on the Hobby-Lobby Program we were back in England. Ramshaw had crossed the Atlantic eighteen times—or, to be strictly accurate, eighteen and a quarter times. Hardly had we reached home than I heard the distressing news that Esmond had been wounded in the *Prince of Wales-Bismarck* action and that he had been taken to Iceland. I could not help fearing that he must have been pretty badly hit or he would surely have remained on his ship.

The cottage to which we returned was now the centre, as it were, of a military population, and, in consequence, had lost some of its rustic charm. Part of it, too, was the worse for a shaking it had received when a land-mine exploded in the park. However, we settled in and made things as comfortable as possible: repairing the broken roof, putting in panes of glass and making the enclosure for Ramshaw and Coronation. The latter, by the way, was in splendid shape, thanks to the care bestowed on her by Mrs. Courtice, who, by the way, had often been worried by the possibility of her charge not getting anything to eat, and lately by the fear that she might be bothered by the attentions of the recently arrived troops. I could not, of course, hope to get any sequences of the eagles in action until some cameraman was available; and that meant waiting for the summer holidays, when Jean would be back from Wales—to which country her school had been evacuated. The intervening time was spent in constantly exercising the eagles so that they would be in first-rate flying order when the time for photography came and by filming

ALL BRITISH EAGLE

various wild creatures and the manner in which they were carrying on in spite of the war : chaffinches nesting in some bushes by the edge of an enormous bomb-crater ; a house-martin collecting mud from the edge of the water that half filled another crater ; a family of moorhens swimming about in a third ; rabbits that had, so far, succeeded in surviving, although men, dogs, ferrets, traps, snares and even gas had done their utmost to annihilate them.

So the time passed and late spring merged into early summer. And what grand weather we had. Day after day of gentle breezes and blue skies. How I wished that Jean had been with me so that we could go ahead with the eagle photography ! And when she did come home the weather changed. Cold winds and almost continual rain took the place of the warm sunlight. Still, we took advantage of any bright periods to try for colour shots which would show the difference in flying and hunting technique between the Golden and Crowned Eagles.

Meanwhile the business of obtaining food for them was becoming a more and more serious problem, and we at last decided that Coronation must follow Miss America and James to some deserving Zoo. We were dreadfully sorry to see her go, but knew that the time must soon come when we should have to part with her, since, apart from the question of food, there would be no one at home to look after her when my lecture season began.

So, at the beginning of August the only eagle of our peace-time collection was the old original Mr. Ramshaw, and since he was to play the lead—as it were—in the film we were making, we continued to secure pictures which would show the sort of war-time life that he was leading.

For instance, we heard that the corn was to be cut on a farm not far away, and it occurred to me that we ought to take Ramshaw along and fly him at any rabbits there might be in the corn, for they would, of course, have to make a dash for it sooner or later as their refuge was gradually laid low. Ramshaw would be doing a doubly good turn by helping to rid the country of what was a serious menace,

MR. RAMSHAW—R.A.F. MASCOT

and, at the same time, providing the main ingredient—some rabbit pies.

We learned that the most satisfactory procedure was to stand, with Ramshaw hooded, at the top of a slope overlooking the field that was being cut, and to wait until a rabbit bolted and was well away from the standing corn before unhooding and casting off the winged hunter. If Ramshaw were allowed to take off too soon the prospective victim would invariably double back into the uncut corn, so that it was once more temporarily safe. As it was, and in spite of the great speed that he gained by travelling downhill he didn't by any means catch all those at which he started, for, finding themselves amongst such suddenly changed surroundings the rabbits did not proceed confidently and at full speed along the familiar track as they had been in the habit of doing, but in irresolute, nervous jumps and starts, and would even crouch and jink aside as Ramshaw, snatching at thin air, went whizzing by. Still, he acquitted himself surprisingly well, and in addition to a number of rabbits, succeeded in bagging two hares.

As usual, when a field of corn is being cut, quite a collection of men and children, armed with sticks, turned up during the latter stages to take part in the fray. Sometimes four or five of them would be chasing a bewildered rabbit in one corner of the field, while the rest of them would be in pursuit of another somewhere else. Every now and then Ramshaw would come sailing along from behind to shoot over the heads, or through the legs of the hunt and to crash onto the quarry. My job was to make-in to him as quickly as I could, to get the rabbit away from him somehow, and amid shouts of "There's another!" "Look! there's two more! Let him go!" to cast him off again.

The sun was sinking as we trudged along the lane leading towards home. Most of the followers were carrying the bodies of rabbits which Ramshaw had provided and we had secured something more precious still—movie records of Ramshaw lending the farmer a hand.

We also went ahead with the making of the final chapter

ALL BRITISH EAGLE

of the film which Ed. had so strongly urged me to produce. "Ramshaw's Dream of Glory," we had decided to call it. The first part ought not to be too difficult: Ramshaw meeting airmen of the United Nations; watching them in their somewhat cumbersome training machines; his decision to form his own Squadron and his flight to Scotland to look up some of his pals and to get them to join the Unit he was forming. Sequences in connection with Ramshaw's inspection of the Squadron before it proceeds over-seas had to be very carefully "arranged," but look quite convincing in the result, which shows the members standing rigidly to attention as Ramshaw inspects them and delivers a little speech in which he congratulates them on their steadiness on parade and their fine bearing.

Less simple were the shots of the A.A. team in the land over which the Squadron flies and the Guard outside the Barracks. We took a lot of trouble over the production of the properly-shaped helmets—which were ultimately created out of newspaper and paste.

Having made them it was almost impossible to get people together to wear them or to act in any of the dozens of other capacities which were necessary to the success of the show. Various friends, when they could get to the location, came along from time to time to lend a hand, and members of the Sevenoaks Players came forward in something like numbers when we needed a real crowd; soldiers helped—anybody who could help, helped.

But perhaps the greatest difficulty of all was to find someone who was equal to the task of playing "the villain of the piece," and he turned up in a most unexpected manner.

I happened to attend a Home Guard "do" at which a Sergeant Mitchell appeared as Old Bill in a most amusing monologue. I could see at once that he was a practised hand at the play-acting business and would be able to take the part of the villain with the tooth-brush moustache to a "T." Talking to him that evening I learned that he was in the early days of films with Hepworth's Picture



WINGS FOR VICTORY

MR. RAMSHAW—R.A.F. MASCOT

Plays and that he still loved the show business. Yes, I roped him in, and he not only played the part of the villain but of a News Commentator, announcing the news of Ramshaw's terrific achievement; of a shy yokel; of an excited Scotsman; of an old gaffer drinking Ramshaw's health, and an old woman dancing on the village green.

Mitch is in the army now. I hope they put him on the Entertainments' side.

And then, the film being practically complete, it transpired that, owing to the exigencies of the situation, Ramshaw and I were destined not to proceed to the United States. Instead, we were to put on our show, or one of our shows, for R.A.F. stations in various parts of Great Britain. It proved to be hard work, for we were booked-up almost to bursting point, and it was insisted that I must take Ramshaw along. I really believe that the authorities didn't much mind whether I took the films or a box of slides or didn't have any illustrations at all. None of that seemed to matter as long as Ramshaw appeared.

At one time we were away, in dreadful weather, for five consecutive weeks doing daily shows at different stations, Sundays included. Sometimes we gave two or even three performances or demonstrations in one day. On top of that were the private demonstrations that we gave in many of the messes. As may be imagined, it was hard work. A great part of the tour was exceedingly good fun, nevertheless, and it was tremendously gratifying to hear the acclamations of men who had only just returned from Cologne, Hamburg or Dusseldorf. Amusing incidents, too, occurred very frequently. How we laughed when, some time after Ramshaw had been returned to his outhouse, and we were standing round the fire at a West Country Station, a Junior officer put his head round the door and gazed about the ante-room enquiringly. After a lengthy silence, he asked in a mysterious voice:

"Where is she?"

"Where's who?" someone asked. "What are you talking about?"

ALL BRITISH EAGLE

"I heard there was a marvellous bird in the mess," replied the newcomer disconsolately.

His remark and general appearance of disappointed enthusiasm was greeted by a roar of laughter which didn't subside when someone broke the news to him that the bird was only a feathered one.

Only once was Ramshaw driven to get rough with a member of the Services.

A Wing Commander it was, who all unthinking, pointed out WITH THE TOE OF HIS BOOT some of Ramshaw's more remarkable features—his beautifully shaped feet; his streamlined chest; his noble head. Ramshaw, standing at the time in an R.A.F. ante-room, concluded that these movements were the prelude to an attack—just like those jerky hand movements that some of the women make—and without wasting further time, he sailed in, grabbed the Wing Commander's ankle, tearing holes through the bottom of the trouser leg and ripping the upper part of a perfectly good shoe, glared round, loosed his grip, and returned to his original restful position. Just a gesture of course, but it was lucky he didn't get a grip of the Wing Commander's ankle. No one else made any imprudent move in their visitor's direction.

In the spring of 1942 Ramshaw and I were billed to appear at the Bournemouth Pavilion, and, having sent the films on ahead, we arrived at the theatre some half-an-hour before the show was due to commence.

As our taxi pulled up, a man in R.A.F. uniform hurried forward to greet us and called in an excited American accent:

"Say, Captain Knight! Remember me? At Cornell with Eg. Pfeiffer! I'm Tony Doherty!"

For a few seconds my brain refused to function. Cornell . . . Egbert Pfeiffer. . . .

Suddenly it came back to me: our show for Cornell University, the publicity stunt, and, of course, Tony Doherty! Now he was a Flight Sergeant in the R.C.A.F. Exclamations, congratulations, questions: "Splendid work.

MR. RAMSHAW—R.A.F. MASCOT

... Eg. in the U.S. Army, is he? ... Yes, Ramshaw's still doing his stuff."

So wrapped up in it all were we that we quite forgot the crowd that had gathered round to inspect Ramshaw at close quarters. "Let's get rid of the taxi and go inside," I suggested. "We can talk better there." But it chanced that there were several other old friends of Ramshaw's inside the entrance too. Would we come to tea after the show? Delighted, of course. "Do you remember me? I stroked Ramshaw when you were last here." "He must be getting on. How old is he?" "My little girl wants to see him, would you come to tea after the lecture?" "I'm awfully sorry, but we've just arranged to have tea with Mrs. Penrose." And so on and so forth. The upshot of it all was that we never saw Doherty again until after the show, or, I should say, "until during the show," for when the films had been shown and I was putting Ramshaw through his paces, an idea flashed across my dull brain which ought to have occurred to me before, and which I decided to put into action.

I made a little speech in which I said that among the audience was an old friend of mine—and of Ramshaw's—whom we had met at the entrance to the theatre. A friend whom we hadn't seen for two years and whom we had never before seen in this country. Ramshaw and I had known him, in fact, in his home-land—3,000 miles away, in the United States of America. It was a great moment when we had met him so unexpectedly—and in uniform of the Royal Canadian Air Force. He and Ramshaw had been great friends when they had last met on the other side of the Atlantic. Wouldn't it be a good idea if they should meet again—publicly, as it were—Now?

Somewhere, hidden amongst the audience—I hoped—was Flight Sergeant Doherty, R.C.A.F.

"Flight Sergeant Doherty," I shouted, "are you there?"

"Yes, right here!" came the reply.

"Well, will you please come up onto the stage so that we can greet an old friend who has come all these thousands

ALL BRITISH EAGLE

of miles to lend us a hand in the Great Cause. I believe Ramshaw wants to salute you, too."

Amid much applause, Tony made his appearance on the stage. It was all rather fun—no nervousness, no formality. A few questions as to how Tony—an American citizen—came to be in the R.C.A.F. ; a few congratulatory remarks and we prepared for Ramshaw to fly to the hand of his American hero.

Tony had, of course, handled Ramshaw before, knew the proper stance with which to receive him, and just how to hold his arm.

With all flood and other lights on and in an eerie silence Ramshaw flew across the breadth of the stage to Tony's outstretched glove. Terrific applause followed. As a final gesture I called Ramshaw to attention, and he stood with wings spread, chest thrown out and head back as though he wanted to do real justice to the occasion.

But the most impressive event in Ramshaw's variegated career was yet to come.

He and I have seen quite a bit of the world together, and, during our travels, have experienced some stirring moments. The culmination of them all was the occasion on which he was elected Official Mascot of a famous Royal Air Force Fighting Squadron.

CHAPTER XVIII

WINGS FOR VICTORY

AND here we are in June, 1943 ; having a rest and preparing to make one or two fill-in shots for the " Mr. Ramshaw Battles the Blitz " film. Esmond and Leslie are here for the week-end and are, at the moment, outside with Jean and Ramshaw. Esmond, of course, cannot see what's going on, although—and I metaphorically touch wood when I say it—he seems to be recovering some sort of sight in the one remaining eye. He says he can now see in bright

WINGS FOR VICTORY

weather, if the sky is blue and can even make out the silhouettes of buildings. If he can ever see again we will have a little party to celebrate the occasion as we had one recently to celebrate our momentous victory in North Africa.

It is just over a year since Ramshaw was made the mascot of the R.A.F. squadron and much has happened to the world and to us meanwhile. In our humble way we have been quite busily engaged and have appeared before a greater assortment of audiences than ever before: R.A.F.; W.A.A.F.; A.T.S.; W.L.A.; A.T.C.; O.C.T.U.; Infantry battalions; A.A. Gun Sites; Cadet Battalions; Schools; Colleges; and Scientific and Lecture Societies. I naturally expected to be confronted with difficulties regarding transportation, the feeding of Ramshaw and accommodation for us both while we were "on the road," and was not disappointed, for irritating, embarrassing and ludicrous situations all cropped up.

Our most recent lecture-season started rather less than a year ago, and at the commencement of it, we spent a great deal of time on a train which took us most of the way to our destination in the West Country. With me in the compartment were three women, two children, one baby and four soldiers. After we had been going for some three or four hours; had read—and exchanged—most of the daily papers we had bought at Paddington and the baby had been sick, the journey began to pall a little. To make things worse all the soldiers were smoking, and, since it was raining outside, the windows were shut. An ominous silence had crept over the hitherto jolly party. I tried to cheer things up by handing my copy of *Struwwel-hiller* (by Doktor Schrecklichkeit)—that highly amusing and witty parody on the old *Strewwelpeter*—to one of the soldiers. I had been enjoying it so much that I thought everyone would like to read it. He opened it eagerly enough but his face remained serious and immobile as he turned its pages. Presently he turned to one of his friends and said in a low voice "Some of this is funny, but I think it's soppy." However, he continued

ALL BRITISH EAGLE

to look through it. Suddenly his face lit up : " Ah," he exclaimed, " this is better. Here's some action." He was looking at the picture of the Greek Goat chasing Mussolini. But after that feeble flicker of appreciation all enthusiasm died away and the little book was handed back to me.

We had to change at one rather small station and to wait for an hour and a half before the connecting train left. So, having seen that Ramshaw was as comfortable as possible and delighted at being out in the fresh, if damp air, I set out to walk to the town to get some lunch. I first called at an inn but was told they didn't serve lunches but that I could get something at the Salvation Army hut across the way. But the Salvation Army hut was for members of the Forces only. There was, they said, a good restaurant in the High Street. " Was that far away ? " " Oh, no—only a few hundred yards."

So I set out for the High Street. It was a long walk in pouring rain, but I eventually reached the restaurant to find that it was full up. " The hotel across the way would probably be able to serve you," I was told.

So on with the coat again and across the way, but the hotel had ceased to serve lunches for some time past. " The café would serve you," they announced gleefully. " And a very good lunch they serve too." So I went to the café. They were full-up, but if I didn't mind waiting. . . . So I waited until there was a vacant chair, and then sat down and picked up the menu card. It was somewhat shop-soiled with dog-car corners. Some brown liquid had, long ago, been spilt on it. It seemed to have originated on some pleasure-cruiser in more peaceful days, for there was a picture of a ship on the other side under which was printed : " The costumes and colour of North Africa add to the variety of an Atlantic-Mediterranean tour." One might have thought that at that time there would have been so much variety in connection with an Atlantic-Mediterranean tour that there would have been little time for looking at costumes or colour.

But to return to the lunch. It consisted of :

WINGS FOR VICTORY

SOUP

CHOICE OF HARICOT BEEF *or* COTTAGE PIE

CHOICE OF CUSTARD

or

TRIFLE

or

PRUNES AND CUSTARD

I had some soup first. It was very watery and light red—rather like claret in appearance—and tasted like sweet pickled cabbage.

I then thought I would try the haricot beef, but was told that that was “off.” So there was nothing for it but to have the cottage pie. I gathered that this was the same beef as that from which the haricot had been made, but was in lumps and mixed with cut-up potatoes and turnips. Really very good. I finished with the trifle, which turned out to be pink jelly with thin custard poured over it.

Having finished my lunch I started on the way back to the station wondering what poor Ramshaw was going to eat that evening, for I hadn’t a thing for him. I really felt quite conscience-stricken to think that I had enjoyed a three-course lunch and he looked like getting nothing. But, as I trudged along in the rain, I saw—to my amazement—a poultry shop with rows and rows of rabbits for sale. I hadn’t seen anything like that since pre-war days. Naturally I was tremendously relieved, particularly as there is nothing that Ramshaw enjoys more than a good tough rabbit. So I entered the shop and asked the man behind the counter if he’d got a really tough one.

At first he thought I was trying to “pull his leg,” but I explained that I wasn’t going to eat it myself, but that it was, in fact, for a tame eagle. He then went to a great deal of trouble to select the oldest and toughest he’d got. The price was 2/–, which was exceedingly reasonable, even

ALL BRITISH EAGLE

if it was one of the old stagers—unfit for human consumption.

For the next few days Ramshaw enjoyed his favourite dish and I had no cause to worry about the food situation. But a rabbit, like all other good things, comes to an end and I could not get another anywhere, try as I might. Neither could I get anything else except a rat which the gardener at the hotel had caught. I hesitated about taking it along with me for Ramshaw to eat, as I had previously presented him with a rat on such an occasion but with disastrous results.

That had been at one of the R.A.F. stations. After the films had been shown and Ramshaw had been brought onto the stage I had produced the rat—out of my daughter's gas-mask case—and explained that I had shot it at home that morning. I was careful to add that we used not to have any rats in the park, but that we had a lot of soldiers there now—which gag went over very well. I then noticed that some ladies, who had come in while the film was being run, were sitting in the front row. They were exceedingly serious people and had not smiled at any of my funny jests, and it flashed across my mind that they might not care to see a rat being devoured right in front of their eyes. So I joked about it and happened to remark that there was a war on, that we couldn't afford to be fussy, that rat was quite *de rigueur* as eagles' food and that Ramshaw would gobble it up in no time. I also made some supposedly-amusing remarks, but, although some of the small audience reciprocated as I hoped they would, the ladies in the front row remained immovable. At last one of them turned to her friend and said, in a loud, icy voice : " How perfectly revolting."

However, since on the present occasion I was to show at a Boys' School I hoped there would be no objection to Ramshaw consuming a rat in public. Actually it was all tremendously appreciated, especially when I brought the rat, wrapped up in a piece of newspaper, out of my pocket.

On the following evening we were again to appear at a Boys' School and were again without anything for Ramshaw. I didn't worry about it unduly since my companion was in

WINGS FOR VICTORY

very high condition and it would not really have mattered if he had not had anything to eat at all for a couple of weeks or so—for such birds can fast for extraordinarily long periods and without any inconvenience—PROVIDING THEY ARE NOT IN POOR CONDITION. But when I announced that Ramshaw would not partake of any food that evening there was a murmur of disappointment among the audience. Then one of the boys rose to announce that his pet guinea-pig had got out of its cage that morning and had drowned itself in a tub of water, and that Ramshaw might have that if he liked. At once the cheerful attitude of the audience revived; the defunct pet was fetched; Ramshaw flew about the room, did his tricks and as a final gesture, stood to attention above the remains of his dinner.

After the show we repaired to the exceedingly pleasant hotel at which I had reserved rooms—at which, that is to say, I had reserved a room for myself—including bath and water H. and C.—and a most comfortable corner of the Air-raid Shelter for Ramshaw.

We were not always so fortunate, of course, and two nights later found Ramshaw in a coal-hole at the local garage and myself having high-tea in a room where there was a large photograph of a gentleman with side-whiskers, bowler hat and white dress-tie over the mantelpiece and a dried-up aspidistra on a bamboo table by the window.

Generally speaking, and judging by comments that I heard afterwards, the shows were well received, although I wasn't always quite sure how far we had been successful. After a performance for a large A.T.S. unit, one of the officers delighted me by saying how much the girls had enjoyed it. "They were really quite thrilled," she wound up.

"Well," I said, rather condescendingly, feeling very proud of myself, "I'm awfully glad. I was afraid it might have been a bit too technical. Too much all about animals and birds, you know."

"Oh, but in this outlandish place they enjoy ANYthing. You see they never go ANYwhere!"

ALL BRITISH EAGLE

Even more unkind was the remark made by the very young daughter of the headmaster of a certain large school. As we sat in his drawing-room after the show she said to me: "That's the best lecture I've ever heard."

"Oh, I AM glad you liked it so much," I said, quite overcome by such a compliment. "I think that's the nicest thing that's ever been said to me."

"Well, as a matter of fact," she went on as though she hadn't heard me, "It's the first lecture I've ever been to, so I suppose it's really the worst, too."

"Oh, thank you, Miss! Thank you!"

These sort of conditions continued till just before Christmas—until December 19th to be exact—when we were to enjoy a respite for a week. Naturally I had had no time to scrounge round trying to get the delicacies usually connected with the festive season, and Jean, who had joined the Land Army, would certainly not have had much opportunity of doing anything about it. So I quite expected we should have to make do with the two worth-while things we had got: a Christmas pudding Jean had made and some of that excellent Westerham ale. The pudding, it seemed, promised to be the last word in puddings, for it contained sultanas, raisins, minced meat, spices and even brandy—ingredients obtained by a series of miracles. Also, hidden amongst its richness were some tiny silver charms. We looked forward to being lucky enough to possess one of the last. My brother-in-law and his wife were coming down to spend the holiday with us, and I hoped they wouldn't object to constant meals of bread and margarine and potatoes, with an occasional boiled rabbit thrown in.

But on December 21st I happened, while in London, to call at the poultry marketing store from which I had often obtained a parcel of chickens' heads for the eagles and to ask my friend if there were any chance that there might be a stray turkey lying about somewhere. He regarded me thoughtfully for a moment and then, to my utter astonishment, replied: "Curious that you should have called to-day. We've had to refuse hundreds of people,

WINGS FOR VICTORY

but it happens that, just now, there is one you can have."

And so the traditional turkey was included in our feast as well as a pheasant, a brace of wood-pigeons, and a hare that turned up from somewhere.

Then Ernest brought a whole case-full of various delicacies and refreshments, so that what with one thing and another we did so well that we left the pudding almost untouched. Ramshaw fared well too, for, in addition to our turkey's head he had a present of a whole box-full from his friends, the Pearce Brothers, of the Sevenoaks Poultry Emporium.

But I spoiled everything afterwards by committing an unforgivable crime.

Jean went back to her job at Tonbridge early on the morning of the 27th, and the others left later on the same day. I was to appear before the Royal Dublin Society on the 30th and 31st, and at Belfast on January 1st, and had arranged to leave on the 28th, so as to be in good time for the first show. I wondered what ought to be done about the pudding. The cottage would be empty for at least a week and I hated to think that in that time it might go bad. I know how readily things do go "off" if left for a few days, and decided that we must not risk such a calamity.

And that is where I made a deplorable error; I gave the pudding to the troops. . . .

I will not dwell on the fact that Jean had looked forward to the time—some months ahead, I believe—when the pudding would be improved 100% by keeping, or on the wrath which descended right onto my head.

Still, it was a consolation to know that it had been appreciated.

The soldiers said it was the best pudding they had ever tasted; they *had* enjoyed it so!

The Irish trip was, if uneventful, extremely interesting. It had its provoking moments too. I kept a rough diary whilst on the tour and it is possible that some extracts from it may give an inkling of what we did and saw during our visit to that neutral country in war-time. It starts:

"Left Esmond, who said he could manage alright, in

ALL BRITISH EAGLE

charge of a porter while I went to look for a taxi after dinner at the Trocadero. Actually I had left it quite late enough. Could not get a taxi, on account of black-out, I suppose. Decided to walk to Leicester Square and take the underground to Euston. Arrived there at 8-30—only 15 minutes to go before the train left. Found porter who brought Ramshaw along on a barrow. Third-class compartments absolutely packed. Ramshaw put into empty guard's van. Porter told me to keep an eye on it as no guard travelling. Luckily had taken precaution of getting 1st ticket and got into compartment with two young men and a girl—Irish; the elder of the two boys in R.A.F. Stopped at Chester about 1 a.m. and got tea and meat pies. Two men, going to Ireland on leave, told me they remembered me at R.A.F. stations and asked after Ramshaw. Next stop Holyhead. Got there about 3, I think. Took some time to find Ramshaw's van in the darkness, and when I found it a long queue of people waiting to get their sailing papers examined. had formed. Porter assured me that about half of them would not get onto the boat—and I was at the tail of the queue! He thought I had better get a room at the local hotel without delay as the next boat was 24 hours later!

"Caught sight of a police sergeant and told him of my plight. When I mentioned that I was going over for the Royal Dublin Society and that I had reserved a berth on this boat he became interested. I was taken before a higher authority, cross-questioned, and allowed to go on board.

"On arriving at Kingstown I got a porter to help me with Ramshaw's crate and the rest of my luggage. He said we must go to the entrance of the station approach to get a cab, so we each took one end of the crate and set out. Outside the approach quite a large crowd was waiting—to see the people come out of the station, I was told. Close by was a line of old-fashioned decrepit-looking cabs or cabriolets or barouches or shandredans, waiting for fares. The one I took was the old type of "four-wheeler" with the driver sitting up in front on a box-seat. Our nag was, I thought, a bit small for the job, being little more than a

WINGS FOR VICTORY

pony, but it pulled us along in great style, the driver urging it forward to greater efforts by cracking a stock-whip like those they use on a cattle-ranch. Rumbling along like this plus the curious horsey smell of the cab reminded me irresistibly of the days before I had seen a motor-car. The illusion was completed when some urchins ran out of a side street and tried to jump onto the back axle. I quite expected to hear someone shout: "Whip behind!" The driver did in fact—after seeing a reflection of what was going on in the windows we were passing—send his great lash swishing round the back of our "fly"—as my father used to call such a carriage—which quickly dispersed our attendants.

"We first drove to the Royal Dublin Society's building at Ball's Bridge and parked Ramshaw in a roomy loose box which had been prepared for him and then on to the Shelborne, where the hall porter asked if the eagle were still alive. It was then about three o'clock and I was famished, having had nothing since four o'clock in the morning. Had an early tea, including two eggs and rolls and butter. Expected to see Germans at every turn, but don't believe I saw one while I was there. The Shelborne is just like an English hotel, except that there were no English cigarettes, but plenty of Lucky Strikes, Chesterfields, and other American brands, and also such nice things as chops and steaks. Had a very thick steak and fried onions for dinner that night. Bought a 2-lb. box of chocolates for Jean and hoped the Customs wouldn't object to my taking them across.

"Ramshaw, who had been written up in the papers before our arrival, proved to be a considerable attraction. He renewed old acquaintances; flew to the hand of an Irish lady, and 'had his picture' in some of the papers.

"The trip to Belfast was interesting, though nothing unusual happened except that I met Dr. Carnworth, who was M.O. for the 1st H.A.C. in 1914. Caught the Heysham boat after the show."

Shortly after our visit to Ireland we went again to the West Country and whilst there we made a hotel in Exeter

ALL BRITISH EAGLE

our headquarters for a few days. *I* made it *my* headquarters, that is to say, for Ramshaw occupied an empty garage which was built under a house that had been badly cracked and shaken during a blitz. When I went to visit him one morning I found that, during the night, the plaster-ceiling had collapsed and that he was sitting amongst a great pile of debris—like Venus rising from the waves, but miraculously unhurt.

In February our work took us up to Scotland on a somewhat protracted tour and we got as far north as Blair Atholl. Blair Atholl ! The place from which Peter Stewart and I had set out to investigate the eagles' eyrie in the solitary pine-tree nineteen years before.

Scotland, it seemed, was full of memories. Gleneagles station—sadly neglected now—conjured up visions of neatly kept flower beds, a smartly turned out station-master and a uniformed attendant who met all trains. What a grand three days Ramshaw and I had spent at the palatial hotel there—as guests of the L.M.S. Railway. For those three days I had lived like a lord—for nothing ! It had been snowing then, and tobogganing was the order of the day, although some of the guests came along when we took Ramshaw out for an afternoon's rabbiting. That must have been ten years ago.

On the present tour, by a very remarkable coincidence, Ramshaw's rations consisted of something he hadn't tasted since he was a downy eaglet in the eyrie. We were to show at Cargilfield one evening, and again, there was absolutely nothing for him to eat, and I made up my mind that he would have to go without until the following day. But it happened that a local ornithologist out on the hills for the afternoon, had gone to look at a hare which an eagle had killed some days before. As he came within sight of it a raven which had been picking at its remains, flew away, and he imagined that there would be little left. On reaching it, however, he found that the "small of the back" and the hind legs were intact and decided to take the quite meaty portion back with him as a present for Ramshaw.

WINGS FOR VICTORY

That evening I, with the rest of the spectators, watched my colleague regaling himself, after fifteen years, on what had been his family's principal item of food—eagle-killed mountain hare. Whether the most unusual meal revived any memories in Ramshaw's mind I cannot say ; it certainly reminded me of the eaglets on the various eyries we had filmed. And I don't know whether a river we looked onto a few days later meant anything to him. It did to me ; not unnaturally perhaps for that was the self-same river up which I had sailed on the destroyer which had picked me up after the torpedoing of the *Volendam* : the self-same river at the mouth of which the *Volendam*, with Ramshaw on board, had been safely beached.

Once more I seemed vividly to re-live the moment when I peered out of the port-hole to behold green fields, peaceful villages and distant mountains. Again I seemed to see the rescue ship that had reached port some two hours after we did : a ship laden with children—survivors from the ill-fated *Volendam*—children who were waving handkerchiefs, cheering and singing "Roll out the barrel."

We arrived back in London one night at the middle of March. It was long after dark and the porter and I, with Ramshaw's crate, had to queue up in the hope of getting a taxi. The porter encouraged me tremendously by telling me that very few taxis came to a station like that so late at night. "Sooner hang about Piccadilly Circus, they would, and get more jobs and more money," he assured me, and then added, "Quite likely there won't be any more to-night."

At length I got a seat in one that was taking a young woman to Piccadilly and was prepared to go on to Charing Cross. We just caught the last train home.

And at home, a few days later, we were visited by a gentleman, Bill Brandt by name who, representing the famous pocket magazine *Lilliput*, had come to take a photograph of Ramshaw. We had supposed that he wanted a picture that, together with another, would make up one of those "comparisons" which the periodical is wont to

ALL BRITISH EAGLE

publish : "Eagle, King of the Air" facing "Lady, Queen of the Cabaret" or something like that.

Our guest arrived with a camera and a wooden case. The latter, to our considerable surprise, contained a good deal of straw mixed up with which were the various parts of an old-fashioned paraffin lamp. We watched wonderingly as he fitted the pieces of the last together. Evidently it was something of especial importance that he was after. Whatever could it be? The lamp was placed, after a good deal of indecision and much consideration, on a window sill whilst Ramshaw was persuaded to occupy the arm of a closer-up wicker chair. Perhaps it was something to do with the King of Birds basking in the Light of Victory. But that wouldn't do since, if the lamp were lit, its light wouldn't amount to anything out of doors on this lovely day. Philip happened to be staying with us at the time and took the accompanying photograph of Mr. Brandt in action. We were tremendously intrigued to see how *Lilliput* would use their picture of "Ramshaw and the lamp." When it was ultimately published it appeared, all by itself, over the title "The Avenger." A problem picture, of course !

We are still asking each other, "Why the lamp?"

Within the last few weeks Ramshaw and I have been doing something we've never done before and which, once this war is over, I hope we shall never have occasion to do again ; putting on our show for "Wings for Victory" celebrations. On these occasions we have shown one of the same old films and Ramshaw has done his same old stuff, but with two amendments : firstly, instead of "Spread your wings" the command, when he is required to stand with wings outstretched, is : "Wings for Victory !" and secondly we have, as opportunities have presented themselves, made some money for the Great Cause in a rather unique way. At this time of the year Ramshaw is deep in the moult and quite frequently has dropped a feather on the stage or among the audience during his demonstration. Such feathers have been put up for auction and

WINGS FOR VICTORY

quite remarkable prices paid for some of them. I would sometimes start the bidding myself by offering sixpence or a shilling, and the value of the feather would quickly rise to the neighbourhood of ten or fifteen shillings. Sometimes really big prices were bid, and the three most generous, most patriotic centres that we visited were Brookman's Park, Sevenoaks and Codicote. At Codicote, Colonel Burton auctioned the feather dropped onto the stage for 35/-; at Sevenoaks I succeeded in getting £2 for one that dropped out as Ramshaw flew over the audience, and some VERY patriotic soul at Brookman's Park paid the fantastic sum of £4 5s. od. for a primary (one of the long "finger-like" feathers) which was quite loose and which I lifted from its surroundings as one picks a cigarette out of a box.

This auctioning of feathers has given rise to a great opportunity for a little quiet leg-pulling and good-natured persiflage.

"Marvellous idea, old boy, carrying a packet of rooster's feathers about with you and pretendin' the jolly old eagle's dropped 'em!"

"Get any commission on the sales?"

"If you continue to pluck the old fellow like this you'll have him naked soon!"

Of course I smile and tell them not to be silly. In the end, though, I have invariably got my own back later on by a simple method that anyone is at liberty to try. You are probably in a district in which enemy bombs have fallen and it is not at all difficult to work the conversation round to the subject of bombing. When they are going at it good and plenty you casually remark: "But you haven't had any dropped round *here*: HAVE you?"

The effect is instantaneous and terrific. A storm of indignation breaks loose:

"Here, what's that? None round *HERE*!"

"Haven't had any . . ."

"Good Lord, man, do you know . . ."

"I bet we had the worst . . ."

ALL BRITISH EAGLE

It is then your turn to laugh and you tell them what simple chaps they are to be so easily gulled that you sympathise with them and that you do REALLY know how brave they are.

It is not always easy to have a reply ready though. Not long ago a certain young fellow, perhaps not feeling exactly on the top of his form, remarked : " Rather a curious pet, eh, old boy? I mean, dash it all, emblem of Germany and Italy. Rather smacks of the Heil Hitler stuff, in a manner of speaking, don't you think? I mean, why not a beaver or a kangaroo or a kiwi? Something British, I mean."

" My dear old boy," I replied, " if you knew this bird's history. If you will buy and read a book about him that I have written—and you must promise me that you will—you will realise that he is a one-hundred-per-cent. Scot—in fact, an ' All British Eagle '."

THE END

